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Historic Resource Study

MARY McLEOD BETHUNE
AND THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NEGRO WOMEN

Pursuing a True and Unfettered Democracy

For the

Mary McLeod Bethune Council House
National Historic Site
National Park Service

By

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It is our pledge to make a lasting contribution
to all that is finest and best in America

. . .

and thus aid her to achieve the glorious destiny of
a true and unfettered democracy.

From the Preamble to the Constitution of the National Council of Negro Women
November 1954

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Preface

It's been almost a half century since, Mary McLeod Bethune (1875-1955) accepted the accolades of eight hundred people on her last visit to the nation's capital. Appropriately, the occasion was a "Brotherhood Luncheon" at the Willard Hotel, sponsored by the National Council of Negro Women. Three months later, a heart attack had stilled Bethune's organ-chimed voice that had been raised over a half century for decency and justice. Fortunately, the organization that she had founded in 1935 as the united instrument of African American women, especially in national and international affairs, continued functioning. It did so from headquarters at 1318 Vermont Avenue in northwest Washington. This had served also as Bethune's residence during the last six years of her fourteen-year council presidency. In 1966, due to a fire, the NCNW abandoned the Vermont Avenue facility. It was restored in the late 1970's as a museum and archives. In 1994 the property went from private to public stewardship, under the auspices of the National Park Service, which christened it the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site.

During the dormancy of the Council House, the NCNW brought Mary Bethune back to Washington in a stature larger than life ensconced in Lincoln Park, "exactly one mile east from the center of the U.S. Capitol Building on L'Enfant's original plan for Washington."[1] There, the seventeen-foot bronze Bethune reminds all who notice that she rendered special services to the country. Given this fact, a logical query is, "What services?" The Bethune Council House contains many answers, particularly relating to her work in the capital. This Historic Resource

Study on Bethune and the council, 1935-1955, supplies some answers too, found in no other place. Little published scholarship exists on this topic, perhaps because academe and other institutions facilitating research have traditionally neglected to scrutinize the experiences of African American women; also, relevant manuscript sources have been either unknown or accessible only on a limited basis. In fact, only in the last year or two have all four parts of the Mary McLeod Bethune Papers, Bethune Foundation Archive--the mother lode of Bethune's papers--been available on microfilm.

Use of such rich primary sources undergirds this investigation, which is to provide "a historical framework for future interpretive and cultural resource management efforts." Viewed from the angle of Washington, it is organized into two divisions: one roughly predates Mary Bethune's establishment of a NCNW headquarters building; the other postdates it. First, however, the NCNW Founder is presented in the Introduction, "Uncommon Woman," especially in relation to the council, that organization of women's organizations. In part one, "Becoming a Compelling Presence: the New Deal and Beyond," two chapters focus on NCNW history: "March Towards Empowerment," discusses the creation of the council, carrying the story to its first nationally recognized milestone, a White House Conference; and "Hallmarks of Growth and Relevancy" takes it into the World War II period. The other chapter, "Womanist Leader in Government," emphasizes Bethune's leadership for youth and all black America. It informs other chapters by revealing a basis for her ability to hold the sometimes fractious National Council together and promote its agenda.

In part two, "Expanding Black Women's Participation in Civic Affairs," the NCNW organizational narrative is resumed in two chapters. Within the late 1943-1949 time span, "Victories and Hopes: New Home, Old Interests," highlights the role of the headquarters building, recounts the council's internationalism, and discusses its domestic issue-oriented program. "Commendations and Moving On," considers the culmination of Bethune's presidency, a summary coverage of the Dorothy Boulding Ferebee and Vivian Carter Mason administrations, and an assessment of the council's first twenty years. "Still Citizen Extraordinaire," surveys Bethune's life after retirement in 1949 and the circumstances of her death. The final chapter ruminates on the contemporary "Council House and the Public." Rounding out this work are statements for easy reference on "Annual Meetings of the National Council of Negro Women, 1935-1955," "Milestones during Mary McLeod Bethune's NCNW Presidency, 1935-1949," and "National Affiliates of the National Council of Negro Women in 1949."

"Mrs. Bethune had a dynamic personality, drive, and a willingness to see herself as epitomizing the capabilities of the black woman," an informed Bethune contemporary observed. "She never settled for less because of race; she knew what she wanted, and she went after it. She managed to reach anybody she sought out."[2] Near the mid-twentieth century, such a leader was indispensable in facilitating an organizational empowerment of black women. It was not easy for the NCNW, bearing in mind the low incomes of black women and widespread denial of Constitutional rights to its members and constituents because of their African descent; plus, the circumscribed political impact of women's organizations in general, when compared to male-dominated organizations.

Nonetheless, the NCNW moved forward. During the twenty years that its Founder either led or later watched over it, the National Council enriched the infrastructure of networks created by women of color, especially through the nurture of national affiliates and local councils. It significantly multiplied points of positive contacts between black and white women leaders at a time when apartheid ruled race relations. It projected enhanced images of African American women and their history to the country and the world that somewhat corrected their skewed images then circulating. It helped to pioneer the professional employment of black women in the federal establishment. It made the presence of black women customary at national and international meetings involving women, sponsored by either the federal government or well established private groups. And, it advanced civil rights as a national issue. In all of this, the NCNW looked towards promoting "a true and unfettered democracy."[3]

The indispensable sources on which this study is based are the National Council of Negro Women Papers in the Bethune Council House National Historic Site, and the Mary McLeod Bethune Papers, Bethune Foundation Archive. For the latter papers, I use the abbreviation BF without further identification in cases were documents were obtained prior to the processing of the collection, an activity commenced in the mid-1990's. Helpful scholarship informing this study that was omitted from the extensive Bethune bibliography that my colleague Audrey Thomas McCluskey and I compiled for *Mary McLeod Bethune: Building a Better World* (1999), is Joyce Ann Hanson's dissertation on Bethune and the "Political Mobilization of Women."[4]

This Historic Resource Study confirms the wisdom of the National Park Service preserving the Council House site as a national treasure. It supports the appropriateness of the Park Service aggressively disseminating the story of "Mary McLeod Bethune and the National Council of Negro Women Pursuing a True and Unfettered Democracy" to ever widening circles of people. The woman and the organization symbolize a triumph of the human spirit that is integral to American history.

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Notes

1. Sandra Fitzpatrick and Maria R. Goodwin, *The Guide to Black Washington: Places and Events of Historical and Cultural Significance in the Nation's Capital* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1999), 60.

2. Frederick D. Patterson, *Chronicles of Faith: The Autobiography of Frederick D. Patterson* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991), 145.

3. Achieving "the glorious destiny of a true and unfettered democracy" were the last words in the NCNW pledge during the 1940's and 1950's. See NCNW Informational Statement, 1946, National Council of Negro Women Papers, Series 2, Box 2, Folder 29, Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site.

4. Audrey Thomas McCluskey and Elaine M. Smith, *Mary McLeod Bethune: Building a Better World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 297-305; Joyce Ann Hanson, "The Ties that Bind: Mary McLeod Bethune and the Political Mobilization of Women" (Ph. D dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1997).

Acknowledgments

I am deeply grateful to the many people who made possible my research and writing this Historic Resource Study on “Mary McLeod Bethune and the National Council of Negro Women: Pursuing a True and Unfettered Democracy” for the National Park Service. The list begins with individuals recommending me to undertake this task, among whom were historians Bettye-Collier Thomas and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn and Council House site director Diane Jacox. Council House cultural resource specialist Robert Parker, was the face of the Park Service in this endeavor. He worked diligently to effect a Cooperative Agreement between his agency and Alabama State University, which permitted me to undertake this work. At my university, Vice-President for Grants and Contracts William Brock, our liaison with Parker, unstintingly supported the project, including eliciting the approval of President Joe A. Lee. Since then he and his office, including grants director Harriet Hubbard, have helped to move the study forward, along with Vice-President Evelyn White, Dean Clifford Bibb, Minnie Wood in Special Collections and other library personnel.

I extend my gratitude to staffers in multiple research facilities who kindly and efficiently assisted me as I prepared this study. In New York City I worked in the Columbia University Oral History Collections; and the Schomburg Center for Research and Black Culture in Manuscripts, Sound and Films, Photographs and Prints, and General Reference. At Hyde Park, New York, I examined several collections in the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and visited Val-Kill, Eleanor Roosevelt’s home. In Boston, I searched through more manuscript collections at the Schlesinger Library for Women's History at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Women's Studies. At Chapel Hill, I researched a portion of the Frank Porter Graham Collection at the University of North Carolina. In Montgomery, I continued to survey on microfilm documents in the Mary McLeod Bethune Foundation Collection, a microfilm project in four parts for which I was the editorial adviser.

Research in Washington was indispensable. There I worked at the Historical Society of Washington, D.C.; Library of Congress; Martin Luther King Library--especially for newspapers on microfilm; American Red Cross headquarters, where historian Brien Williams made my work easy; and University Publications of America, where staffers Randy Boehm and Nicki Hume graciously facilitated my acquaintance with unprocessed Bethune Foundation papers and Bethune's testimonies before Congressional Committees. Also I utilized the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University, encountering Janet Sims-Wood, whose bibliographies on black women, including Bethune, have long aided my research.

As might be expected, in the course of this study I came to know the Bethune Council House. Rangers Margaret Coleman and Lavel Merritt, and Specialist Robert Parker all went beyond the call of duty in advancing this project. Parker facilitated my use of the Council House Archives and my visit of requested city sites associated with Mary Bethune. This included the White House, where Park Service White House Director Ann Bowman Smith conducted a tour, and White House assistant curator Lydia S. Tederick displayed requested photographs.

Besides individuals at research sites, I also acknowledge several others. I thank Professor Bettye Collier-Thomas and Park Service historians Gary Scott and Frank Faragasso for their comments on a component of the study. In addition to Faragasso's written observations, he was kind enough to share his encouraging remarks at a professional meeting. I also appreciate the encouragement of my Department chairperson and other ASU colleagues, and other friends, including Sangernetta Bush and Lillian Wilson Hill. Furthermore, I am deeply indebted to my family, particularly my mother B.J. Moore, sister Elizabeth M. Johnson, and husband Alfred S. Smith, who have unfailingly supported all of my Mary McLeod Bethune endeavors.

Introduction: Uncommon Woman

> You and I must fight as never before to make our government realize the ideals upon which it was founded. . . . We must help save the soul of our nation and its way of life so we can really save the world.[1]

Mary McLeod Bethune (1875-1955) tackled the most intractable issue of her time and all American history: the gargantuan inequality between blacks and whites. Most simply call it racism. Working counter to its entrenched magnetism, she helped to advance the status of African Americans, particularly women, and by so doing extended the parameters of democracy. As Gunner Myrdal acknowledges in *An American Dilemma*, his 1944 authoritative and panoramic survey of race in the United States, a gifted race leader required political skills of the highest caliber, including "a set of practical ideals, a training in strategy, and a respect for courage, patience, and loyalty." Bethune had them all.

Bethune acted as a liaison between blacks and whites, for in her day the masses of the two races did not normally interact, especially politically, but made that a function of their respective leaders. She possessed skills well-suited for a liaison including superb oratory and a humanitarian soul from which "she gave out faith and hope as if they were pills and she some sort of doctor."[2] In the 1930's, during the zenith of her career, one University of Nebraska professor declared, "I do not believe that our students or I have ever met with a woman who is so inspiring and who is able to interpret things in such a tactful way to a mixed audience that they get her points without getting any feeling of animosity." He then notes characteristics contributing to her impact. "She is so natural in her approach, and so uninhibited, and so free of any complexes, that one can approach the problem of race relations with complete freedom and really get the Negro's interpretation.[3] With such gifts, this phenomenal woman helped to make civil rights for a people once enslaved an inescapable agenda item for American society. As a woman, simultaneously she drew attention to career women and other gender-related matters.

One indication of Mary McLeod Bethune's success on the race-gender front, was the immediate response of the press to her death from a heart attack on May 18, 1955. Reflecting Black America's sense that a titan had fallen, the *Atlanta Daily World* proclaimed her life "one of the most dramatic careers ever enacted at any time upon the stage of human activity." Indicative of a more restrained liberal white press, the *Washington Post* affirmed, "So great were her dynamism and force that it was almost impossible to resist her. . . . Not only her own people but all America has been enriched and ennobled by her courageous, ebullient spirit." Capturing both her character and popular white feelings, her hometown *Daytona Beach Evening News* editorialized: "To some she seemed unreal, something that could not be. . . . What right had she to greatness? . . . The lesson of Mrs. Bethune's life is that genius knows no racial barriers."[4]

In the depression year 1930, as Bethune staggered but maintained her private junior college, the North American Newspaper Alliance requested popular journalist Ida B. Tarbell to name the fifty living American women who had done the most for the welfare of the United States. Using the criteria of ability to initiate or create, to lead or to inspire, and to carry on showing continuing power, Tarbell wisely ranked Mary McLeod Bethune among the likes of Children's Bureau Administrator Grace Abbot, settlement founder and social reformer Jane Addams, suffragist and peace leader Carrie Chapman Catt, aviator Amelia Earhart, writer and advocate for the handicapped Helen Keller, poet Edna St. Vincent Millay, social reformer

Frances Perkins, birth control reformer Margaret Sanger, novelist Edith Wharton, and college president Mary Woolley.[5]

Arguably, Bethune traversed a greater distance than any of these luminaries to impact the nation. Scholars have studied her life relatively little, however, particularly her leadership in women's organizations. In 1944, when considering business and professional groups, Gunnar Myrdal wrote, "Special mention must be given to the *National Council of Negro Women* even though we cannot describe or evaluate it." Since Myrdal's day, writers are beginning to describe and evaluate the council better, thanks in part to the opening of the NCNW Papers and the recent accessibility of the Mary McLeod Bethune Foundation Archive on microfilm.

Nonetheless, published scholarly essays and books that explore Mary Bethune's work within the NCNW are few. The two most used Bethune biographies--no scholarly biography exists--predate the fore-mentioned archival developments and give short shrift to the National Council. Catherine Peare's *Bethune*, published in 1951, treats the NCNW in less than four pages; thirteen years later, Rackham Holt's *Bethune* carries less than five. Pitching their books to young readers, both writers focused on Bethune's educational career. In 1981, the National Council of Negro Women published the only book-length documented survey of the organization, written by historic preservationist and historian Bettye Collier-Thomas. Bethune's presidency is discussed within seven pages plus notes. A few other studies provide helpful data on Bethune and the council, but typically their focus is elsewhere.[6] Consequently, given the relative dearth of scholarly secondary sources, this Historic Resource Study on Bethune and the NCNW is pioneering a vital aspect of the history of black women's national leadership. As such, it reveals significant information about the challenges faced by African American distaff leaders and their responses to them.

Perhaps when the scholarship on Bethune relative to leadership in women's organizations, the black advancement movement, education, and government are combined, a consensus will emerge ranking her in the handful of greatest women in the annals of the country. African American scholars have already reached a consensus concerning her in relation to other blacks. For having crossed a field to make an essential contribution to the development of black America, they place Bethune among the "Four Greats," along with Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. DuBois, and Martin Luther King.[7]

Currently, with a perspective of nearly a half century, and an improved comprehension of the civic contributions of women and their organizations, dimensions of the legendary Mary McLeod Bethune may be understood, however incomplete the scholarship is at this time. Her pioneering work laid a foundation for America's acceptance of a Condoleezza Rice as a prominent adviser to a U.S. President. Her beautiful and accredited institution of higher education, the only one in the country a woman has developed from a small elementary school to a baccalaureate college, continues in the serious business of molding minds and lives. Her National Council of Negro Women continues as a networking entity to advance the causes of gender, race, and country. The beliefs on which Bethune staked her life continue to be relevant to a nation racially divided, but still seeking "a more perfect union." As stated in her literary "My Last Will and Testament," her beliefs "may be viewed as a part of the universal attributes needed for a positive, multicultural life in the Western world, and elsewhere," even though they developed in the unique context of the black struggle in the United States.[8] But most of all, Mary McLeod Bethune continues to inspire generation after generation with the promise of America and the triumph of the human spirit.

Little wonder that Bethune has been acknowledged as an extraordinary American in multiple ways, including namesake streets, parks, buildings, and organizations. Her picture hangs in the South Carolina state house in Columbia and it has also appeared on a commemorative United States postage stamp. The Florida's Women Hall of Fame in Tallahassee, the South Carolina Hall of Fame in Myrtle Beach, and the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, New York, all celebrate her achievements. Her residence in Daytona Beach, Florida, appears on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1975 it became the first Florida site to so commemorate an African American. Her residence in Washington, D.C. is now officially the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House, National Historic Site, under the auspices of the National Park Service. Moreover, Bethune is immortalized in a bronze sculpture in the nation's capital, which in 1974 became the first statue on federal land in Washington to honor either an African American or a woman.

Although such tributes foster an acquaintance with Bethune, she may be appreciated properly only in the context of her times--the Great Depression, World War II, Cold War, McCarthyism, Civil Rights Struggle, White Supremacist Backlash, and other overarching developments. During the last two decades of her life, 1935-1955, the time frame of this study, the racial inequality that starkly blanketed the land increasingly concerned her. The desire to maintain it bore so deeply into the American psyche that Bethune and allies seldom even used the words "civil rights." Often Bethune made the term "door" a metaphor for civil rights. In 1938, she explained, "A door has been sealed up for two hundred years. You can't open it overnight but little crevices are coming. . ." More frequently, liberals couched civil rights in terms of democracy or democratic values and principles. Bethune's government agency, the temporary National Youth Administration, for example, retrospectively noted, "Of primary significance to the carrying out of democratic principles was the consistent attitude of NYA officials toward nondiscrimination."[9] Especially nearing World War II and afterwards, as the nation's leaders bandied democracy as an opposite to fascism and later, to communism, civil rights activists emphasized democracy more than ever. In 1939, Bethune quoted President Franklin D. Roosevelt in his address to the 76th Congress: "If another form of government can present a united front in its attack on a democracy, the attack must be met by a united democracy." Then to a distinguished assembly of black leaders she added, "No such 'united democracy' can possibly exist unless this 'common opportunity' is available to all Americans regardless of creed, class, or color." Here, within the context of democracy, "common opportunity" became her metaphor for civil rights.[10]

But whether termed common opportunity, door, or democratic principle, the lack of civil rights or equality circumscribed African Americans. In 1940, for example, more than a ten-year differential existed in the life expectancy of blacks and whites. Non-white males lived an average of 51.5 years and females, 54.9 years; whereas, white males lived an average of 62.1 years and females, 66.6. With more than 75 percent of the country's 12,866,000 blacks in the South, that region spent an average of $18.82 on the public education of an African American but $58.69 on that of a white.[11] In statements published in 1939, Bethune conveyed such inequality. Relative to blacks, she remarked that poor, segregated and sometimes nonexistent schools and health services, in tandem with lynching and disfranchisement, came packaged with appalling economics. Three million African Americans were essentially dependent farmers; a little more than three million others were domestics "generally working long hours for a little pay." Another group, between two and three million, were "at the mercy of trade unions, often barred from membership and forced to 'scab' in order to work." And with another large segment of the populace unemployed, only a fraction of the African American labor force held relatively desirable jobs.[12]

While the status of blacks improved during Bethune's life, embodied and highlighted by the 1954 Brown Decision of the United States Supreme Court, which outlawed the "separate but equal" doctrine in public education, advancement appeared piecemeal and painfully slow in a rapidly changing world. Racism so ruled the South that in December 1955, the initial request in part of Martin Luther King and other Montgomery Bus Boycotters was not desegregated seating, but merely that whites be seated from the front to the rear and blacks from the rear to the front.[13]

The racial temper of the times in relation to Bethune requires an awareness of ebony women and their status. They were "so hampered by the multiple burdens of gender, race, and class that of all groups in the nation," they were "on the farthest fringes of opportunity, economic security, and civic participation," and thus regarded by mainstream society chiefly as a cipher. Consequently, regardless of significant accomplishments, they customarily inhabited the shadows of public life, even in advancing the race. In dealing with whites, often in situations of gender subordination, they struggled for opportunities commensurate with those already available to white women.[14] In 1933 when Frances Perkins became the first woman in a presidential cabinet and other white women appeared on the national scene, not one race sister in the entire country was a legislator, judge, or ranking agency administrator either locally or nationally. In fact, black women had difficulty getting jobs in mainstream America as clerks, secretaries, and sometimes domestics. Most were employed in agriculture and domestic service.[11] Moreover, sometimes they were at a disadvantage vis-a-vis black men, for they were barred from certain situations admitting their brothers. In 1936 Bethune confessed, "Whether it be my religion, my aesthetic taste, my economic opportunity, my educational desire, whatever the craving is, I find a limitation because I suffer the greatest known handicap, [to be] a Negro--a Negro woman."[15]

Bethune not only coped with being a black woman, but being an unattractive one in the minds of many during her day and since, even though all knowledgeable people have noted her commanding presence. Her raven hue, kinky-textured hair, flaring nose, and full lips demonstrated an overwhelming African ancestry when society--including most of her contemporary African Americans--identified such literal blackness and Negroid features with ugliness and inferiority.[16] "She was black as coal. She was stumpy in stature. A little like Jesus, in that she had no form or comeliness," a white friend reported. An African American friend spoke idiomatically but with a qualifier. Bethune was "ugly as homemade sin, but when she began moving. . . she became beautiful."[17] Most informed blacks probably would have substituted, "when she began speaking," as this writer has heard several times, "she became beautiful." Historian Constance Green had heard about the same thing, for in describing Bethune she related, "With her deep-chocolate-colored skin, her heavy build, and rather prognathous jaw, she seemed like a product of darkest Africa--until she spoke." Even so, since "beauty is in the eye of the beholder,"opinions of Bethune's physical attractiveness undoubtedly have varied. At birth, however, neighbors thought her homely.[18]

Mary McLeod was born the fifteenth of seventeen children to former slaves Sam and

Patsy McLeod near Mayesville, South Carolina, in the twilight of Reconstruction. She grew up in a county having in 1880 9,979 whites dominating 27,058 African Americans in ways reminiscent of the past. A lifetime later, having moved from the status of poor, rural, black girl to national leader, Bethune succinctly silhouetted her career: "I have risen from the cotton fields of South Carolina to found a college, administer it. . . become a public servant in the government and country, and a leader of women."[19]

During her first twenty-one years, multiple factors enabled her to rise. She found a sense of security based upon faith in God and then in herself, at home--especially through her mother's influence--and in the institutions she attended: Trinity Presbyterian Mission School, outside of Mayesville, South Carolina; Scotia Seminary in Concord, North Carolina; and the Bible School for Home and Foreign Missions in Chicago, later named the Moody Bible Institute. She associated with two phenomenal African American females who established boarding schools. They were Emma Jane Wilson, her first teacher and later the founder of the Mayesville Educational and Industrial Institute and the more prominent Lucy C. Laney, the creator of the Haines Normal and Industrial School in Augusta, Georgia. These women and others encouraged young Mary McLeod to act upon a deeply rooted missionary inclination. Particularly critical in her development was imbibing the character of an exemplary educational institution by living in one: the all-girls boarding school, Scotia Seminary, which during her impressionable sojourn there was headed by the influential Dr. David J. Satterfield. And finally, she developed a cosmopolitan orientation of sorts while at the Chicago Bible School through contact with people from around the world.[20]

Based upon this foundation, Mary McLeod Bethune's life became one of public service.

Her husband, Albertus Bethune (1870-1918), her only biological son Albert McLeod Bethune, Sr. (1899-1989), and her first grandson Albert McLeod Bethune, Jr. (1921-), had to take in stride this dedication to public service. From the small elementary school she had started in 1904, Bethune established Bethune-Cookman College, in Daytona Beach, Florida. In the 1930's, as director of the Negro Division of the National Youth Administration, she was the highest ranking black woman in the history of government. Through it she succored youth on an unprecedented scale with social services, educational grants, vocational training and government-facilitated jobs. Concurrently, she was a leader at large, in part by organizing and sustaining the mostly male Federal Council on Negro Affairs, popularly dubbed the Black Cabinet. This enabled the few black professionals in government to render greater service to the race. Moreover, Bethune conceived and nursed along the National Council of Negro Women, black women's first council of national organizations.

In relation to NCNW, Bethune understood that black women had to take the initiative, and do so consistently to enhance their status. Nobody else could be depended upon to push them into public affairs, even though black men, white men, and white women all assisted at times, just as they ignored them at times. Consider examples of the latter. In 1935, when Howard University President Mordecai Johnson submitted to the director of the National Youth Administration a list of seventeen possible black consultants and employees, not one race sister appeared.[21] Given that, perhaps it should not be surprising that nine years later, when the White House approached Paul McNutt, chief of the War Manpower Commission, about a position for the unsalaried Bethune, he acquiesced to giving her a job--which she declined--but emphatically stated that she could not occupy the top position for blacks because that belonged to a man, preferably from the

North or Middle West.[22] And, only some times were white and black women allies, for after white women gained admission to the female navy, marines, and coast guard in the early 1940's, for instance, the chief organizational advocates of women in the military--the American Association of University Women and the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs--remained silent as black women fought for years to enter those military services.[23]

To consistently fight for blacks on race-gender issues, Bethune envisioned a coalition of all African American women's organizations. It was to permanently insert ebony women into local, national and international discourse and actions in both government and non-government affairs. NCNW was to give constituents visibility and voice in local communities, mainstream America, and the world. It was to facilitate their working with women of all colors, races, and nations on common matters. As did its founder, the organization combined concern for both race and gender, without castigating black men, which made it a womanist body. Bethune was certain that her brand of womanist leadership could speak authoritatively in the nation's capital, as the New Deal exercised an unprecedented influence over American life, due to the exigencies of the Great Depression.

Materializing under less than enthusiastic circumstances, still the National Council of Negro Women became a fact at a meeting Bethune convened on December 5, 1935, in New York City. Out of approximately forty national organizations eligible to join the proposed body, only three or four sent representatives authorized to commit to a new organization. Other than Bethune, only six of the thirty women present lived outside New York City. Two came from nearby Orange, New Jersey, and Jamaica, New York, respectively. The others were long-time

Bethune associates in womanist leadership: educator Charlotte Hawkins Brown, Sedalia, North Carolina; real estate broker and reformer Addie Dickerson, Philadelphia; civil rights reformer Daisy Lampkin, Pittsburgh; and writer-lecturer and educator Mary Church Terrell, Washington, D.C. But even they appeared lukewarm founding mothers. Nonetheless, struck by Bethune's stellar achievements, vision, and ardor for the cause, all present voted to create a permanent council with Bethune as president. At the time, that was all the charismatic Floridian needed.[24]

Within two and a half years Bethune had propelled the council to the forefront of female race organizations in the national life of the country. Of prime importance was a White House Conference held April 4, 1938, made possible through the assistance of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. Black women presented a fresh image of themselves, putting the government on notice that they, too, were America; that they were prepared to contribute to planning and administering federal programs. From that point on, through vigilance, cooperation, and protest, the NCNW went from one hard-fought victory to another.

The event which opened the door to its routine participation in federally sponsored activity for women was the War Department's 1941 decision to include the organization in the Women's Advisory Council to its Women's Interest Section, a public relations unit for women. Around this time, the essentially white National Council of Women of the United States, a voluntary non-governmental body, extended membership to the NCNW as well. In these and other ways, the NCNW became the acknowledged representative of ebony women. This meant that whites in the Roosevelt Administration gave attention to NCNW-espoused concerns, which included federal employment, voting, anti-lynching, housing, health, education, the military and internationalism. Even if the attention were essentially symbolic rather than substantive, it was more than government had previously measured out to race sisters.

The government's response, in turn, encouraged growth and the internal elaboration of the NCNW structure, including local chapters, a regional organizational tier, a respected quarterly, a monthly newsletter, a headquarters building, and a professional staff assisted by numerous volunteers. During World War II, this apparatus promoted patriotism. The organization gladly took on more responsibility to insure an Allied victory. Towards the end of the war and afterwards, the council shared in the peace building process, particularly through United Nations-related activities. In November 1949, as Bethune's presidency culminated, the NCNW counted twenty-three national affiliates. They were professional and occupational groups, both broadly based and subject-restricted academic sororities, church denominational societies, fraternal associations, auxiliaries, and assorted other organizations. Additionally it had eighty-four metropolitan (local) councils in twenty-six states, and numerous life members. "No one but a Bethune could have carried out the idea of gathering Negro women into a national body," a council sister averred. "No one but a Bethune with unearthly power to sway human beings like the wind--and play on their heartstrings as if they were violin strings--so that the tune played hit the right notes--could have gone as afar as she has."

While Bethune was on the scene, the NCNW was "filled to the brim with topflight women of all ages."[25] Bethune mentored many of the younger women, including alternate United Nations delegate Edith S. Sampson, physician and educator Dorothy B. Ferebee, social service administrator Vivian Carter Mason, educational administrator Arenia C. Mallory, and businesswoman Marjorie Stewart Joyner. Hundreds of other women who were considered effective leaders in the 1950's, came under Bethune's influence, according to Congressman Adam

Clayton Powell. Henrine Ward Banks of Chicago acknowledged to Bethune that she was one. "You have given many of us a grand foundation, on which we are going to continue to build," she wrote. "You have helped us to think and plan in a big way, big things so that each of us in our small way can make a worth-while contribution, for which many of us are grateful."[26]

Mary McLeod Bethune was tendered many such accolades when she vacated the NCNW presidency. Afterwards, she continued to speak and raise funds for the organization, and in other ways assist successive NCNW chiefs Dorothy Boulding Ferebee and Vivian Carter Mason. Under the leadership of all three presidents, the council made great strides in empowering black women. It enriched the infrastructure of black women networks, multiplied points of positive contact between black and white women leaders while segregation reigned, projected a truer image of black women and their history, assisted in opening to black women professional government employment, made the presence of black women customary at national and international affairs, and advanced civil rights as a national issue.

In retirement, the remarkable Mary McLeod Bethune was as mindful as ever of the necessity for women to assist in the advancement of other women. In 1950 she informed Eleanor Roosevelt, "I am convinced that men continue to seem not to have the value of the services of prepared women. . . . I feel more and more that we have got to place more qualified women in important places to hold and build the morale."[27] Believing "there were no limits to what a woman might do if she set her heart on it," such ideas were characteristic of Mary McLeod Bethune, who accurately described herself as a "leader of women."[28]

Notes

1. Mary McLeod Bethune, "Americans All: Which Way, America???" in *Mary McLeod Bethune: Building a Better World--Essays and Selected Documents*, ed. Audrey McCluskey and Elaine M. Smith (Indiana University Press, 1999), 187.

2. McCluskey and Smith, ed. *Bethune: Building a Better World*, 199, source of Myrdal quote; xii, other quote.

3. Ernest F. Witte to Richard D. Brown, April 16, 1938, National Council of Negro Women Papers, Series 4, Box 1, Folder 9, Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site, National Park Service, Washington, D.C.

4. Elaine M. Smith, "Introduction," *Guide to the Mary McLeod Bethune Papers: Bethune-Cookman College Collection* (Bethesda: University Publications of America, 1995), v-vi.

5. Tarbell, "Fifty Great Ones," *Woman's Journal* (new series), 15 (December 1930), 6.

6. Myrdal, *American Dilemma*, 816; Catherine Owens Peare, *Mary McLeod Bethune* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1951), 213-214, 167-169; Rackham Holt, *Mary McLeod Bethune: A Biography* (Garden City, N.Y: 1964), 181-185, 265-266; Bettye Collier-Thomas, *The National Council of Negro Women, 1935-1980* (Washington, D.C.: National Council of Negro Women), 1-7. Additional data on Bethune and the Council in published secondary sources include Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: William Morrow, 1984); Tracey A. Fitzgerald, *The National Council of Negro Women and the Feminist Movement, 1935-1975* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1985); Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy A Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999).

7. "The 50 Most Important Figures in U.S. Black History," *Ebony* (February 1989), 176.

8. Bethune, "My Last Will and Testament," in *Bethune: Building a Better World*, ed. McCluskey and Smith, 58-61; for an analysis of Bethune's document see Elaine M. Smith, "Mary McLeod Bethune's Last Will and Testament: A Legacy for Race Vindication," *Journal of Negro History,* 81 (1996), 105-122.

9. Proceedings of Annual Meeting, November 26, 1938, 39, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 1, Folder 4; *Final Report of the National Youth Administration* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943), 235.

10. Bethune, "Opening Statement to the Second National Conference on the Problems of the Negro and Negro Youth," in *Bethune: Building a Better World*, ed. McCluskey and Smith, 232-233.

11. Peter M. Bergman, *The Chronological History of the Negro in America* (New York: Mentor Books, 1969), 486-487.

12. Elaine M. Smith, "Introduction: From '1939 Honor List' to 'An Inspiration for All Time,'" *Guide to the Mary McLeod Bethune Papers: The Bethune Foundation Collection, Part 3* (Bethesda: University Publications of America, 2002), v.

13. Jo Ann Gibson Robinson, *The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987), 135-136.

14. McCluskey and Smith, *Bethune: Building a Better World*, 131.

15. Bethune quoted from "Closed Doors," in *Bethune: Building a Better World*, ed. McCluskey and Smith, 208.

16. See for example, Smith, "Introduction," *Guide to the Bethune Papers, B-CC Collection*, vi.

17. Sidney Strong, "American Notes," *Unity* (December 16, 1929), Mary McLeod Bethune Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University; The Reminiscences of John W. Davis, 1976, 312-313, in the Oral History Collection of Columbia University.

18. Constance McLaughlin Green, *The Secret City: A History of Race Relations in the Nation's Capital* (Princeton, N.J., 1967), 237; Holt, *Bethune*, 1, 10.

19. Bethune, "My Last Will and Testament," 61; *The Statistics of the Population of the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office), 407.

20. See, for example, Elaine M. Smith, "Federal Archives as a Source for Determining the Role of Mary McLeod Bethune in the National Youth Administration," in *Afro-American History: Sources for Research*, ed. Robert L. Clarke (Washington: Howard University Press, 1981), 47-49.

21. Mordecai Johnson to Aubrey Williams, [1935], Aubrey Williams Papers, Box 12, Advisory Committee, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

22. Grace Tully to Franklin D. Roosevelt, February 12, 1944, Office of the President, File 5393, FDRL.

23. Susan M. Hartman, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940's* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), 31-32, 45-46, 147-148.

24. "Minutes of the Organizational Meeting of the National Council of Negro Women,"

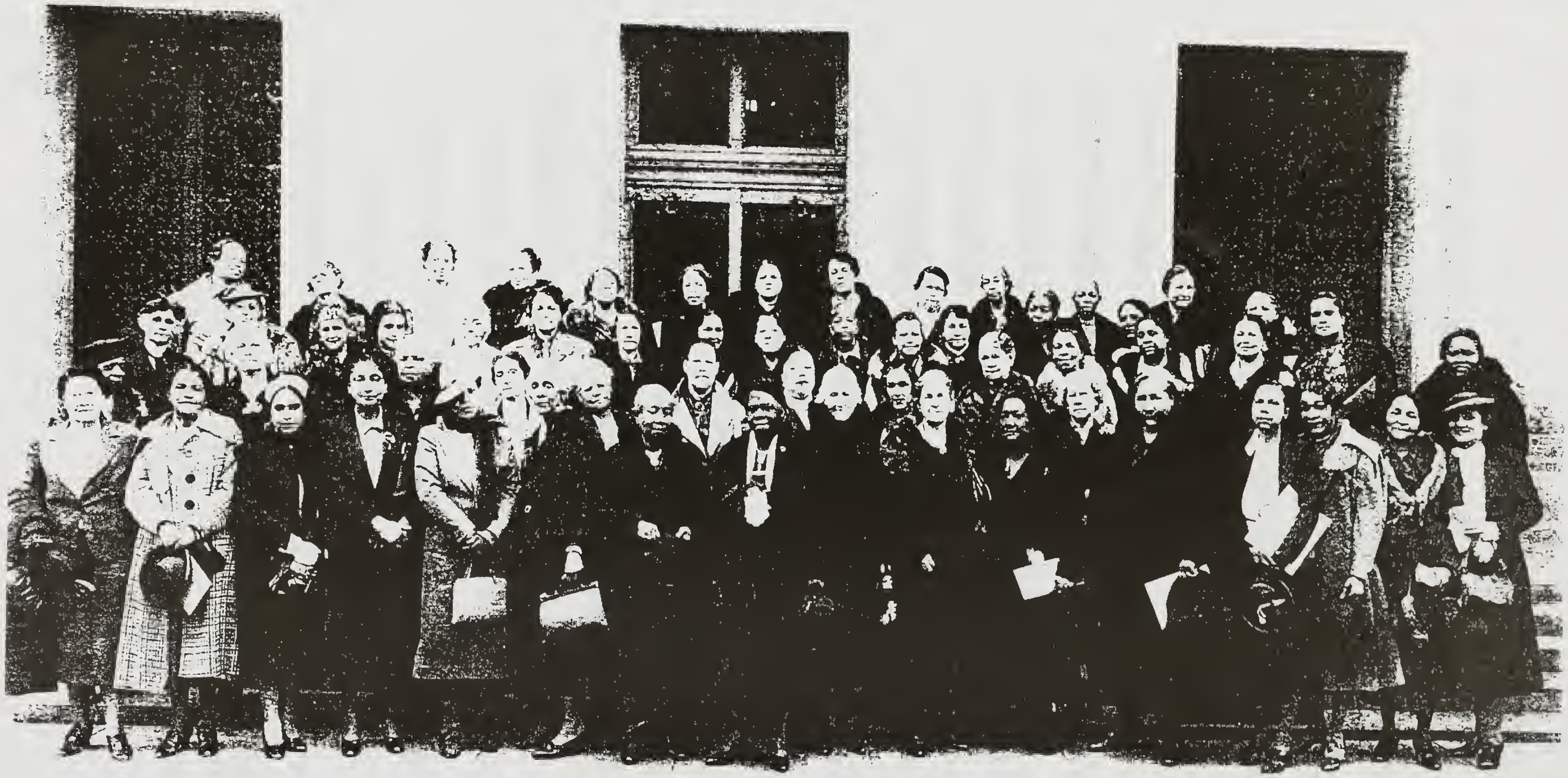
in *Bethune: Building a Better World*, ed. McCluskey and Smith, 168-173.

25. Quotes from Toki S. Johnson, "Toki Types," *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 27, 1948, 8.

26. Powell's observations were made in Earl Devine Martin, "Mary McLeod Bethune: A Prototype of the Rising Consciousness of the American Negro," (M.A. thesis, Northwestern University, 1956), 86; Henrine Ward Banks to Bethune, August 21, 1948, BF, Part 2, Reel 14.

27. Bethune to Eleanor Roosevelt, July 11, 1950, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Bethune File, Box 3834, FDR Library.

28. Quote from Vivian Carter Mason in an interview with Barbara Grant Blackwell in Barbara Grant Blackwell, "The Advocacies and Ideological Commitments of a Black Educator: Mary McLeod Bethune, 1875-1955," (Ph.D. dissertation: University of Connecticut, 1979), 191.



WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS. Individuals attending the National Council of Negro Women's White Conference on April 4, 1938, found that "Negro women and children do not participate in federal welfare programs to any extent in proportion to their need" because of African Americans "virtual exclusion from the administrative or policy forming offices" of the federal government. Mary McLeod Bethune, wearing flower at mid-center front row, is flanked on the left by Elizabeth Carter Brooks and on the right, by Mary Church Terrell. All three were former presidents of the National Association of Colored Women.

NCNW *Women United Souvenir Year Book*

PART I. BECOMING A COMPELLING PRESENCE THE NEW DEAL AND BEYOND

Chapter 1

March Towards Empowerment

Introduction

Chicago Defender's Venice Tipton Spraggs had broken the color line in Theta Sigma Phi, the professional and honorary fraternity for women journalists. Alma J. Illery had organized National Achievement Clubs to extend knowledge of and aspirations towards black achievement and originated George Washington Carver Day. Charlotte Hawkins Brown had founded and presided over Palmer Memorial Institute, "a little bit of New England in North Carolina." In the 1940s, daughters of a people once enslaved strode forward! Transformed by World War II, some were distinguishing themselves in the military, education, art, theater, screen and radio, music, literature, journalism, court litigation, social welfare, and political activity. This was during the era when "separate but equal" reigned, meaning that virtually everything was separate and nothing, equal. In 1948, seven years before the U.S. Supreme Court repudiated racial segregation in the Brown Decision, research-writer Jessie P. Guzman, reporting facts on ebony women, asserted that they "have reached out into the larger community and have affected the Negro as a race, the American people as a nation, and even the international scene."

Interestingly, the National Council of Negro Women honored or counted as members a significant number of the seven dozen luminaries Guzman cited in "The Social Contributions of the Negro Woman Since 1940." Especially does this apply to political activity. In California, Pauli Murray served as Assistant Attorney General. In New York City, Jane Bolin presided over a Court of Domestic Relations, the first and only black female judge in the country. And, in Washington, Thomasina W. Johnson, previously acclaimed as the first full-time black Washington lobbyist, headed the Minority Groups Section of the U.S. Employment Service, located in the Department of Labor. While these professionals revolved somewhat in the NCNW orbit, Jessie Guzman's political activists included five proven NCNW stalwarts: Sara Pelham Speaks, an attorney who had been the first black woman to run for the New York legislature; Eunice Hunton Carter, Assistant District Attorney in New York; Edith Sampson, Assistant State's Attorney in Chicago; Sadie T.M. Alexander, an appointee to the U.S. President's precedent-setting Committee on Civil Rights; and Mary McLeod Bethune, college founder and former president, the highest ranking African American in the New Deal, leader at large during the administrations of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and the founder-president of the NCNW. "Mrs. Bethune," Guzman remarked, "is or has been connected with almost every movement for the advancement of the Negro." At that time, she promoted advancement primarily through the NCNW, an umbrella body for national organizations of black women.[1]

This chapter highlights the NCNW vis-a-vis Bethune chiefly from inception into its first three years. More specifically, it discusses the NCNW with regard to the following: original goals; appropriateness of non-traditional typologies; circumstances in the 1930s forming the context for its establishment; creating the new organization; the first two years relative to acceptance and visible activity; and finally, the 1938 event that encouraged the government and black America to take note of the new player in national affairs.

Objectives

In July 1936, at the time of incorporation, the NCNW had four objectives, which while sometimes restated differently and to which others would be added, remained basic to the organization from 1935 to 1955, the time frame of this study. The first dealt with the council's uniqueness as an organization of organizations. It aimed "to federate organizations of every type among the women of the race in one gigantic body," as the *Christian Advocate*, organ of the Methodist Episcopal Church, once stated.[2] Although never corralling all targeted groups, still this super council claimed representative numbers. Numerical strength was crucial to attaining the power it aspired to exercise in public affairs. In 1937, Bethune projected a million members.[3] The next year, she toned it down considerably by tangling before council women a hypothetical membership of 500,000. She truly believed that a National Council representing "five hundred thousand thinking, leading women of all. . . the states of the Union" could impact national life. Therefore, it's no surprise that the NCNW always endeavored "to unite member organizations." The council could permit nothing to block a working relationship with national affiliates, for therein lay the numbers.[4]

Its character as an alliance of national organizations made the NCNW a natural for fulfilling its second purpose: collecting, classifying, and distributing information regarding or significantly impacting organized African American women. This clearinghouse function was integral to the council. From the late 1940s it appeared in the organization's Constitution and By-Laws as follows: "To collect, interpret, disseminate and preserve information about and particularly affecting women."[5]

The NCNW's emphasis upon clearinghouse and unifying purposes may be viewed as ends towards a mean; namely, achieving empowerment for a people whose status was inferior in American society, as its other objectives suggest. The NCNW's 1936 charter declares as its third purpose, "To educate and encourage Negro women to participate in civic, political, economic, and educational activities in the same manner as other Americans participate." Unstated was the presumption that black sisters would do so both for themselves and for others; also, that they would use varying approaches: black solidarity, integration, both the forementioned, or something in between. Closely related to objective three was the NCNW's goal of sponsoring projects. "To initiate and promote, subject to the approval of member organizations, projects for the benefit of the Negro," was the wording of the council charter. A decade later the expression of this had mushroomed. The NCNW was "to provide a channel and articulation for the millions of Negro women of this country in their struggle for opportunity and equality." The "struggle for opportunity and equality" had to be waged primarily in the larger society. To this the NCNW was dedicated.[6]

Non-Traditional Typologies

Womanist Consciousness

In November 1936, with the National Council approaching its first birthday, Mary McLeod Bethune beckoned women to its second annual meeting in New York. Especially with Bethune's full time Washington work in government and full time Florida work at her college, at the time, the council was still in a state of becoming a functioning national organization. Acquainting the country with its aims, Bethune's preliminary call to the council parley targeted women, but emphasized aspirations that some have overlooked. Women were to unite "to fight the battle of the Negro masses and promote their integration into the fabric of the American democracy;" they were "to function in thought and action for the entire race and nation;" and "speak as one voice and one mind for the highest good of the race." Bethune was so interested in all understanding that, although the council focused on the female status simultaneously it improved the race and nation, that she said race and nation twice. Using "sonorous and enthusiastic phrases," on "the place in Negro and American life" that the council might occupy, Bethune briefed a reporter as follows.

> There is today a most intense need for the Negro women of America to stand shoulder to shoulder in solid phalanx *to fight the battle of the Negro masses and promote their integration into the fabric of the American democracy*. . . I am vividly aware of the great need for the strength of organization and of the great opportunity for constructive work and leadership.
>
> The National Council of Negro women, comprising the membership of the national organizations of the women of America for the purpose of collective coordination *to function in thought and action for the entire race and nation*, has a field of service today that has never been heretofore offered. Under sincere and competent generalship, our national life has awakened to an alert social consciousness and the first challenging streaks of a new day for the underprivileged masses break across the horizon.
>
> Late in December, we plan a conference dinner in New York City. . . where we hope the flower of American Negro womanhood will dine and think together, will plan, discuss, and finally adopt a workable constitution, and go out to work together in the highways and the byways *for our race and for our nation.*
>
> There is 'big business' ahead for the National Council of Negro Women, giving a chance to all national bodies of women, young and old, to pool their thinking and all together *speak as one voice and one mind for the highest good of the race.*[7]

Even though in fact, as the preceding suggests, Bethune and the National Council included the welfare of the masses, the race, and nation, as well as black women within the scope of their services, one scholar contends, "The Council made black *women*, not black families or black communities, the hub of their program." More specifically, historian Deborah Gray White argues that during the early years, the National Council privileged gender over race. "Under Bethune black women's distinct needs took precedence. . . . Under [NCNW President Dorothy] Height, general concerns of the race became a priority. . ." Interestingly, historian Tracey A. Fitzgerald charges the opposite. "In its early years, however, the NCNW gave primary consideration to concerns about the racism of America," she writes, " and Bethune also seemed to consider the NCNW's primary battle to be against the oppression of blacks. . . . It was not until after Bethune's death in 1955 that the NCNW began to work for the advancement of all women and youth at a level of commitment equal to its work for racial equality."[8]

Of the two positions, Deborah White's assertions that Bethune and the council emphasized gender over race challenge the most popular assumptions about Bethune. Occupying the center of the Civil Rights Struggle of her era, Bethune, as Jessie Guzman had recounted in 1948, was "connected with almost every movement for the advancement of the Negro." More than a decade earlier, columnist Edward Lawson had reported in the same vein. She "gathered everything and everybody under her very ample wing," meaning the most representative black leaders in and out of government, to create a collective agenda for federal action to ameliorate the disadvantaged status of blacks in American life. This federally-sponsored conference on "The Problems of the Negro and Negro Youth," was facilitated by the Federal Council on Negro Affairs, better known as the Black Cabinet, which Bethune had organized. After the conference, contemporary scholar-columnist Kelly Miller observed then and later that Bethune was the logical successor to race leader Booker T. Washington, who died in 1915. "She is acceptable to the white people of the South, the white people of the North, the Negro himself, and the government authorities to a degree and extent not equaled since the mantle of leadership fell from the shoulders of the great Tuskegeean," he declared. A half century later, a distinguished panel of black scholars ranked Bethune's race leadership with that of Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. DuBois, and Martin Luther King.[9] This leads to a question: conceding, as most informed people have done, that in the early years, the NCNW was Bethune and vice versa, how could the council NOT embrace race and gender issues seamlessly, without prioritizing them, just as Bethune did?

When considering both the contentions of Deborah White and Tracey Fitzgerald relative to the rank order Bethune and the NCNW assigned to race and gender, it is evident that they take for granted the separability of race and gender in the experiences of black women. They view them making history as women or making history as blacks, but not making history as black women. This is unreal. At the 1936 NCNW session in New York, for example, Bethune urged black women to "get behind legislation and matters of public interest which affect the Negro as a whole and Negro women in particular." Continuing, she advised them, "to make their proper contributions to all matters affecting women as a whole, regardless of race."[10]

The ideas of historian Elsa Barkley Brown regarding historians who have delimited race and gender in specific African American women's experiences are appropo. The historians gave in "to the tendency to assume that black women's lives can be neatly subdivided, that while we are both black and female, we occupy those roles sequentially," Brown disputes, "as if one cannot have the two simultaneously in one's consciousness of being. Such a framework assumes a fragmentation of black women's existence that defies reality." Moreover, Brown continues, "What they fail to consider is that women's issues may be race issues, and race issues may be women's issues." From this perspective, Bethune and the council's drive for the employment of black women in the federal bureaucracy was as much a race issue as their lobby for equitable funding in the separate white and black schools was a women's issue. Dichotomous thinking separating sex and ethnicity in the lives of race sisters, as Elsa Brown elucidates, stemmed from dropping "black women inside feminist perspectives which, by design, have omitted their experiences," particularly in determining what are "women's issues and women's struggles." Since feminism places a priority on women and black solidarity places it on race, increasingly students of the African American woman's experience are using the term womanism to embrace both concepts. Womanism is "a consciousness that incorporates racial, cultural, sexual, national, economic, and political considerations." It seeks "sexual equality in the black community plus the world power structure that subjugates both blacks and women."[11] Under Bethune's leadership, council members acted on race and gender problems in a holistic context. They possessed a womanist consciousness.

Integrated Autonomy

In addition to a womanist consciousness, members of the NCNW approached their issues with the ideology of integrated autonomy. Just as womanist consciousness incorporates in particular two considerations--gender and race--that too often are seen as either-or, so does integrated autonomy. It combines black self-determination with integration, mirroring the duality of being both a black and an American. For Bethune and her organization, neither black self-determination alone nor integration alone was enough to achieve equality. Since she melded the two, some have thought her a chameleon. She was not. Historian Christopher E. Linsin emphasizes the consistency of Bethune's leadership, using the concept of integrated autonomy. He elucidates it in relation to her below.

> A strong and consistent advocate of racial uplift through industrial education and hard work, Bethune embraced Booker T. Washington's educational perspectives and his advocacy of racial pride and group solidarity. Also sympathetic toward the position held by Washington's ideological nemesis, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, Bethune embraced notions of racial empowerment by seeking both black social autonomy and full integration into the white economic community. Melding the philosophies of both Washington and Du Bois, Mary McLeod Bethune embraced an ideological position that sought to resolve America's pressing problem of racial inequality. Her position on race relations, best described as integrated autonomy, was well suited for the turbulent 1930s and 1940s.[12]

Certainly, integrated autonomy covers both the language and actions of Bethune and the NCNW. But they called it simply integration. For example, in Bethune's *Pittsburgh Courier* column in 1937 titled "Integration and Participation," she explained, "My gospel is now, as it always has been, the weaving of Negro life and activities into the warp and woof of the fabric of American life." Here she recognized that blacks would continue to maintain a group life and simultaneously have that group life integrated into mainstream life.[13] In a sense Bethune and the NCNW roughly equated integration with moving towards greater black empowerment in a society progressing towards desegregation. More specifically, they defined integration in two seemingly contradictory ways. One was conventional, a single program or situation for whites and blacks without regard to race; the other, a separate one based on race when the option for blacks meant much less, provided that blacks possessed equitable resources and control over their program or situation. Some may describe the latter understanding of integration as separate equality, the immediate goal of the NAACP in the 1930s for litigating to equalize teacher salaries and school facilities in southern public schools. The intransigency of racial segregation buttressed by law made little else possible.[14]

While separate equality may describe an aspect of integrated autonomy, it should not be confused with segregation. Bethune never advocated that. As Linsin insists, "Bethune emerged a strong and consistent proponent of full integration into the American system while advocating black civil rights leadership." In this stretched context of integration, better stated as integrated autonomy, Bethune discussed in a 1938 NCNW gathering the exclusion of black polio victims from the therapeutic waters of Hot Springs, Arkansas and Warm Springs, Georgia, the latter made famous by FDR's visits. "We [African Americans] are going to have a Warm Springs somewhere else," she vowed to council members, "where we are going to get our share of the money in putting in of these Negro leaders over these several states of the Union [for such facilities]. In that same meeting, Charlotte Brown assailed the exclusion of blacks in mainstream life also within the context of integrated autonomy. "We are asked to contribute money for the Red Cross and, while its personnel consumes a great deal of money, there is not one paid colored worker," she fumed. "We have got to get into this field. We must get into everything as a part of it, to share all the benefits as well as give advice." Bethune rejoined, "I am sure what she has said is definitely the object of the National Council."[15]

Just as council women stretched the use of integration to mean black leadership over blacks in a separate equality, more frequently they used it in the conventional sense of locating African Americans, particularly women, into mainstream activity. The term integrated autonomy subsumes this also. As to actually integrating organizations constructively engaged, the NCNW was explicit. It was "to participate whenever possible and in every acceptable way with organizations having few or no Negroes as members." Such action possessed the potential for two-fold rewards. The first was "to bring back to Negro women the thinking and planned action of these groups." The other was to permit those organizations to discover the considerable "strength and talent" of black women by working with them. If these organizations were attempting to represent women as a group, they actually required black women's participation to achieve "the complete material and spiritual unity of women."[16]

Regardless of council members' use of integration, whether conventionally or as integrated autonomy, inclusion of it in their pledge inspired many with the promise of America. As repeated time and again in the 1940s, it read as follows.

> To make a lasting contribution to all that is finest and best in America, so that her heritage of freedom and progress will be infinitely enriched by the *integration* of Negroes into the economic, social, cultural, civic, and political life of this country and thus achieve the glorious destiny of a true and unfettered democracy.[17]

Context

As the Great Depression blanketed the 1930s, every man, woman and child in the United States felt its impact. Already in depression before the Stock Market Crash of '29, many African Americans experienced hardship on top of hardship. In 1934, the government determined that 38 percent of African Americans were no longer capable of supporting themselves, compared to 17 percent of white Americas so classified. Both men and women suffered together. But traceable to the intertwining of race, gender, and employment, African American women occupied the farthest fringes of opportunity, civic participation, and economic security. While the nature of their jobs constituted but one dimension of their status, economic considerations trumped most others in the Depression decade.

Necessity had driven a much greater percentage of race sisters into the labor market than the percentage of their white counterparts. Whereas between 10 and 30 percent of white women usually worked outside their homes, typically about 50 percent of black women did. Yet unlike white women, they benefitted hardly at all from structural changes in the economy, which were creating more jobs in sales, communications, clerical work, and other white collar areas. White America deemed ebony women unworthy of such employment. This translated into fewer than 5 percent of race sisters in white collar jobs. That being the case, certainly black America counted relatively few teachers, nurses, and other such professionals. Nine out of ten working black women did so as farm laborers or domestic servants, frequently finding employment only seasonally or part-time. Black women picked cotton and toiled in other back-breaking field work, many with threat of eviction dogging them, for neither they nor their families usually owned the land. Black women domestic servants often knew insecurity too, either because employers could sometimes no longer afford them, or the necessity to increasingly compete with white women desperate to make a little money. Moreover, the very nature of domestic employment was rife with abuse. A different set of abuses usually awaited the tiny percentage of black women who found industrial jobs. More often than not, supervisors assigned them to the dirty work that white women refused in commercial laundries, slaughterhouses, and the garment industry. But regardless of the nature of jobs most black sisters found--whether on farms or in households and service establishments or in industries--when they lost them, and consequently sought relief-aid, unsympathetic welfare officials routinely denied the applications of many simply because they were black women. And if their requests were honored, typically the grants were smaller than to whites.[18]

At a time when women of color sorely needed to address employment and other national issues pertaining to their status, the National Association of Colored Women, composed chiefly of those with education and stable economic situations, retreated from the challenges of leadership. Although sending messages to public officials on issues close to them at least biennially, the vision for this foremost African American women's organization espoused by President Sallie W. Stewart, a public school teacher and realtor from Evansville, Illinois, paralleled its downsizing. Twenty-two major departments, reflecting the extensive interests of the membership, collapsed into two--one was the Mother, Home and Child; the other, Negro Women in Industry. Concentrating primarily on the former, the NACW held that the deficiencies of African Americans were entirely within the home. Sadly out of touch with reality, the Association undermined its historic role of representing black women in public affairs and experienced a marked diminution in means to do so.[19]

Against this backdrop of both a regressive NACW and the declining status of race sisters, Mary McLeod Bethune, a former NACW chief, called for a united front of black women in public affairs through a federation of organizations. In the sense that national issues and national identity would claim a larger share of members' consciousness, contends Deborah Gray White, as opposed to local self-help projects, Bethune proposed a council in the ideological image of the International Council of Women of the Darker Races and the National Republican Colored Woman's League. She had helped to establish both. They were "two of the first new black middle-class women's organizations."[20] Bethune's conceptual council allowed for all organizations of black women to become a collectivity, and thereby exercise considerably greater influence in behalf of black women, the race, and the nation. If established, she claimed also that it will "make for unity of opinion among Negro women who must do some thinking on public questions; it will insure greater cooperation among women in varied lines of endeavor; and it will lift the ideals not only of the individual organizations, but of the organizations as a group."[21]

Certainly Bethune had a viable case for a new black women's federation. Still, this "organization of organizations" owed much also to Bethune's will to lead and to dominate--attributes virtually essential for operating an unendowed, private black school in a Southern racist environment prior to the 1960s. Former National Association presidents Margaret Murray Washington and Mary B. Talbert seemingly manifested these same traits, for after their NACW tenures, the former founded the International Council of Women of the Darker Races; the latter, the Anti-Lynching Crusaders. In 1928, when Bethune retired from the NACW presidency according to its constitutional time limits, it may be argued that her assertive personality, among other factors, expressed itself in a move to direct the organization. It took the form of appointing Rebecca Stiles Taylor, then her private secretary for NACW concerns and the former president of the Georgia Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, as the association's executive secretary. Bethune had created this pivotal salaried position. When the Executive Board insisted that the incoming president had the authority to appoint an executive secretary of her choosing--and certainly it would *not* be the experienced and highly competent Rebecca Taylor, for she was in the Bethune wing of the Association--right then and there Bethune probably envisioned her own national organization.[22]

Bethune's idea of a National Council of Colored Women stemmed from energetic participation in an essentially white women's national council. In fact, concerning Bethune's would-be organization the *Christian Advocate* observed, "This council would function among colored women somewhat as the National Council of Women functions among white women largely." Developed in 1888 during the women's suffrage campaign and initially directed by the likes of Frances E. Willard and Susan B. Anthony, supposedly this body was open to any organization of women "of undoubtedly national character." The member affiliates retained autonomy, however, for the council disclaimed any power to influence them "beyond suggestion and sympathy."[23] By invitation, African American women had joined through their National Association in 1901, and prized the affiliation. While Mary Bethune, a life member of the council, fully appreciated its value, she fully appreciated also its tokenism. "We have, existing, of course, the National Council of Women of America [the United States]," she explained to potential members of her conceptual organization, "but this council is made up of thirty-eight national women's organizations, only one of which is a Negro organization. This does not give our other splendid national organizations of colored women chance to work out, the one with the other, the many problems which face us as a group."[24]

Creating the New Organization

Having justified a need for a black women's council, Bethune called for its organization on March 22, 1930, at her beloved Bethune-Cookman College, in Daytona Beach, Florida, a beautiful city catering to upscale northern tourists, located on the Atlantic coast about a hundred miles south of Jacksonville. Out of the sixty-four individuals Bethune invited--forty-six presidents of national organizations and eighteen other personages--twenty attended, including Maggie Lena Walker, bank president in Richmond; Mamie Williams of Savannah, Republican National Committee-woman for Georgia; and Jennie Booth Moten, educator and wife of Tuskegee Principal Robert Russa Moten. Participants hailed from seven states: Florida sent ten; Georgia, three; Alabama, three; Virginia, two; and New York and Illinois, one each. These women failed to create a council. Instead, they empowered a committee to study and advertise the council concept. Bethune, the chair, was to inform all national groups about it, "requesting that they consider the matter in their next annual meeting or convention, or next executive meeting, and arrange to send their decisions through representatives or otherwise to an organization meeting to be held at a later date at some central point." Bethune's high hopes were dashed![25]

Yet five years later, on Thursday, December 5, 1935, at the 137th Street Branch of the Young Women's Christian Association in New York, Bethune presided over a three and a half-hour luncheon meeting to consider again her conceptual federation. Only then, instead of describing it as colored, she used the term Negro to reflect race pride and solidarity, as well as "a rejection of the color/class hierarchy" existing in early twentieth century black America.[26] Bethune's publicizing and promoting had brought to this gathering twenty-nine other women, a few as individuals but most as organizational representatives. The names of some groups suggested that they were ineligible for council membership because they included both genders and/or they were white-controlled. These were the NAACP, YWCA, National Health Service for Colored People (the descendent of the Circle for Negro War Relief), National Association for Housing, and the National Women's Council of the Department of Racial Relations connected with the Federal Council of Churches. Another organization, the Eutopia Neighborhood Club, in New York, was strictly local, and thus ineligible too. And given the leadership, self-help, and community-based orientations of the National Association of Colored Women, its joining up was problematic.

Even so, ten other organizations would qualify for membership in the proposed super council. Four revolved around careers: National Association of Business and Professional Women, National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses, National Business Women of America, and Iota Phi Lambda Sorority (business). Three developed within religious denominations: Mite Missionary Society of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, National Baptist Women's Organization, and the Women's Auxiliary of the National Baptist Convention. Two were broadly-based sororities originating in academe: Alpha Kappa Alpha and Delta Sigma Sorority. And one lacked a parallel there, the National Association of College Women. Moreover, since their leaders telegramed endorsements for creating a council, it was likely that two other organizations would join up: Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, a broadly based sisterhood emanating from academe; and the Grand Temple, Daughters of the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World. (IBPOEW). Varied and mixed could best describe the organizational representation that was to consider creating the NCNW. .

With much at stake, Bethune articulated her vision.

> Most people think that I am a dreamer. Through dreams many things have come true. I am interested in women and believe in their possibilities. The world has not been willing to accept the contributions that women have made. Their influence has been felt more definitely in the past ten years than ever before. We need vision for larger things, for the unfolding and reviewing of worth while things.

> Through necessity we have been forced into organizations. The fraternal organizations through their groups have made things better for communities and this has been wonderful. They have created better leadership and have been able to give better service.
>
> Six years ago I visited a National Baptist Convention. There was a large group of reports from crude places, but it showed that they were blazing away for better things. No organization has done a greater job for womanhood than the National Association of Colored Women. The Business and Professional Women have made an enviable record, also the sororities with the high ideals. But for the past seven years I have thought seriously of all national organizations as well as individuals forming a Council of Colored women so that we can make a stronger appeal for putting over big projects.
>
> The National Council of Women has 43 organizations with only one Negro organization and we have no specific place on their program. We need an organization to open new doors for our young women and when the council speaks its power will be felt. For seven years I have been dreaming; I have given no publicity to my ideas; I feel that we who are present should make the hub and have the national organizations as the spokes. It will take work and representation on our part. My appeal to you is to begin to think of the big things done by past leadership who dared to stand for right and let us fight today with Negro womanhood in mind. If we are on the right track let us know.

In responding to Bethune's challenge, individuals expressed varying views. If not negative, some were lukewarm. Charlotte Hawkins Brown contended, "There are too many organizations. There is a need for a council or conference but none for an organization." Addie Hunton, veteran civil rights and women's rights activist, maintained, "We have got enough organizations." Yet countering this, she mused, "This council will give our Negro women a status. There is not a great group behind our women to push them." The venerable Mary Church Terrell, the first NACW president, concurred: "I do not see how the mistakes made by other groups will not be made by this one. . . . I cannot see any reason how this group can do more than others, but I think it worthwhile." Executive Secretary of the host YWCA Cecelia

Cabiness Saunders inserted, "I am willing to help but don't feel that the organization is needed."

Others talked more enthusiastically. "I am very much interested, declared Carita V. Roane, manager of the Harlem Branch of the state Department of Labor, "and I think it a wonderful thing." A former teacher at Bethune-Cookman, Belle Davis, reflected, "Mrs. Bethune has always been on the right track. . . I heartily endorse the movement." Clara Burrill Bruce, assistant resident manager of the Paul Lawrence Dunbar Apartments, added, "I am in hearty sympathy and feel the time is ripe for such a movement. We have been thinking too long on individual problems instead of national ones." Mabel K. Staupers of the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses concluded, "I think that we should have a permanent organization. It was not an easy task to have women come here from many cities just to listen to a discussion."

Finally, when the moment of truth arrived, these women whom Bethune had cajoled and implored to attend the meeting, showed themselves loyal to her. Addie Hunton of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority moved, and Staupers seconded, that the group assembled become a permanent organization called the National Council of Negro Women. All present agreed. Next, on a motion from Terrell, again unanimously carried, Bethune became its president. The group instructed her to plan for the future with a committee. That was all Bethune needed.[27]

Factors of time, place, and leadership accounted for the creation of the National Council in 1935, rather than five years earlier. Regarding time, historian Paula Giddings suggests that in '35, the failure of the white Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching to endorse the Congressional Costigan-Wagner Anti-Lynching Bill may have contributed to the founding of the NCNW later in the year. The Jessie Daniel Ames-led ASWLP demonstrated its power negatively, by failing to endorse legislation blacks deemed vital, in a year witnessing white lynchings of eighteen blacks. This had to have awakened some race sisters to the need for a vehicle through which they could wield influence in behalf of timely issues.[28]

More importantly, however, for the timing of the NCNW was the federal government's openness to women and blacks as it became involved on an unprecedented scale in the lives of ordinary citizens during peacetime. On the women's front, for example, essentially white women's groups--among them the ASWPL, the League of Women's Voters, the National Women's Trade Union League--were being heard more frequently in the corridors of power. Additionally, a noticeable change had occurred in the look of some federal public servants in 1935, when compared to 1930. Aided and abetted by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, like never before the government recruited women for responsible administrative positions. The most visible, of course, was the first female cabinet member Frances Perkins of the Labor Department. Not only that, but the government recruited also black male professionals for newly-created positions, with the Harvard-educated economist Robert Weaver as first. Most came as advisers in the Depression-spawn temporary agencies. Nevertheless, they represented the return of a black political presence to Washington, which had been lacking since the demise of Reconstruction. It seemed to Bethune and some activist friends that the time was ripe for the national political scene to accommodate women of color also.[29]

Just as late 1935 was propitious for organizing, New York City was the right place for meeting. In that hustling-bustling "metropolis of the world," as Bethune termed it, with "the largest urban group of Negroes anywhere in the world," resided a concentration of progressive leaders active in the majority of black distaff organizations. About two-thirds of those creating the NCNW lived in Greater New York. By contrast, attendees at the 1930 conference, had assembled in a retreat locale. In recommending that the next gathering occur at "some central point," they recognized that Daytona Beach was the wrong geography for assembling a representative cross-section of female leaders.[30]

Closely related to time and place was leadership. Bethune exercised wiser leadership in '35, by wooing more exclusively organizational spokespersons, as opposed to individual women. This sharper focus in part doubled to sixteen the national groups represented in New York. The NCNW founder, however, not only demonstrated smarter leadership, but enjoyed greater leadership stature in 1935. That year President Roosevelt made her one of two black advisers to the newly-created National Youth Administration, an agency assisting youth to cope with the exigencies of the Depression. Seizing the potential inherent in the thirty-five member Advisory Committee, Bethune labored for youth as if she were on the paid staff and in the process significantly enhanced her visibility and prestige. Also in 1935, she achieved these intangibles as the Spingarn Medalist of the NAACP. It bestowed upon her its annual Spingarn Award for the most meritorious service to the race. "In the face of almost insuperable difficulties," the NAACP announced, she [Bethune] had almost single-handedly established and built up Bethune-Cookman College. . . ." About five months later at the council's organizational meeting, Bethune had the coveted round, gold medallion hooked to a black, red, and gold sash, looped around her neck before considering business.[31] The NYA advisory position and Spingarn medal had established her leadership independent of the National Association of Colored Women, especially for those believing that her bid for a council in 1930 rode the coattails of her association presidency in an unseemly way. Thus at mid-decade, along with a viable concept, the right time, place, and leadership combined to produce an umbrella council for race women.

Settling-In

Bethune could revel little in the realization of a seven-year dream. So many women expressed a “so what” attitude. Then the National Council sustained ambivalence and fire, carried nationally via the Associated Negro Press (ANP). The immediate past president of the National Association, realtor Sallie W. Stewart of Evansville, Indiana, representing hundreds of influential women, responded coolly. In the most emphatic tones possible, she announced that the Association “shall not be moved” [by the National Council]. Remembering that Bethune had first called for a council in 1928, she averred, “I do not believe that in 1935 any more than in 1928 there is any aim at sabotage against the National Association of Colored Women. There may or there may not be necessity for such an organization; in face of the facts, women may judge for themselves without hurt or harm to any organization.” While Stewart was lukewarm, Chicago physician, Mary Fitzbutler Waring, speaking for her constituency, was red hot. This National Association sitting president charged that the council grew out of dissatisfaction with Charlotte Hawkins Brown’s unsuccessful campaign--one that Bethune managed on the floor--for the Association’s presidency; that the council would in effect sabotage fundraising for the Association’s heavily encumbered headquarters building purchased during Bethune’s administration; that the council was unnecessary since sufficient outlets already existed for black women’s national and international interests; and that the council symbolized the institutionalizing of segregation, when African Americans needed integration.[32]

As chair for life of the Association’s headquarters trustee board, Bethune responded by announcing a new fundraising drive for it. As NCNW president, she rationalized the council as “a main channel through which national organizations of Negro women. . . might have a means of concentrated thinking and action in the affairs of the country." National Association members, greatly divided and having mostly decided about Bethune's leadership earlier, now reacted accordingly.[33] Unprecedented actions of Association leaders in the 1930s exacerbated divisiveness. By changing the regular Association meeting from 1932 to 1933 to accommodate their members attendance at the Chicago World's Fair, they unhinged a delicately balanced process, which had fostered a sense of equal regional participation, particularly equal access to the presidency. The change in year and place of the scheduled 1932 regular convention contributed to holding two successive conventions in the same region in relatively nearby locales-- in '33 Chicago, and in '35 Cleveland; and the successive election of two presidents from neighboring states--Sallie Stewart of Indiana and Waring of Illinois. Previously, the presidency and the convention had rotated among the regions.[34]

Had not the Association's Central Region cradled a hotbed of mal-contents relative to Bethune's stewardship as NACW president, its domination of the organization from 1928 to 1937 may have been of small import. But leaders Stewart and Waring, and subsequently many followers, never caught Bethune's vision for an expansive Association; one that would nationally and internationally "assume an attitude toward all big questions involving the welfare of the nation, public right and especially the present and future of our race." Nor had they favored headquarters at 1114 O Street in Northwest Washington, were Bethune had established it. They wanted headquarters in the Federal Douglass Home in Southeast Washington, whose trustee board consisted of clubwomen under an independent charter. Bethune always opposed it because the Association could not own or control the Douglas property and, if headquarters were there, its officials would be at the mercy of those who did. Certainly, Waring and others developed an animus towards Bethune over this, especially when enthusiasm for the O Street headquarters abated in the Depression, as did money to pay the mortgage.[35] Consequently, Margaret E. Barnes, President of the Ohio Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, had reason to lament that when the National Council was organized, "the smouldering fire of discontent already burning, burst into an uproaring flame that threatened to consume our very spirit." Certainly near the eve of Pearl Harbor, negativity toward Bethune and her new organization continued to burn. The women's editor at the *Pittsburgh Courier* told the "axe-wielders" against the council to stop their attacks. About the same time, the *Brown American* described the council as "an organization, which many think was started to weaken the influence of the National Association of Colored Women, to which all federated clubs of colored women belong." The National Council had much to overcome.[36]

First, however, the council effected organizational necessities: incorporating, writing a constitution, and electing officers. It incorporated in Washington, D.C., on July 25, 1936, using for an address the office of Howard University's Dean of Women Lucy D. Slowe, whom Bethune saw as "an untiring champion of the cause of Negro womanhood." While projecting a nation-wide membership, women on the New York-Washington corridor seemingly ran things. The important Constitutional Committee consisted of four New Yorkers--Clara Bruce, Carita V. Roane, Lillian Alexander and Addie W. Hunton; two Washingtonians, Lucy Slowe and Juanita Saddler, the latter a former New Yorker; and a Philadelphian, Addie Dickerson. The committee reported to the body on April 29, 1936, at a dinner conference on Howard's campus. At the December meeting in New York, after committee chair Lucy Slowe read the document and members discussed it, the council adopted the constitution, later called By-Laws. It proved to be a work in progress, however, for over the next few years diligent revamping occurred.[37]

The body elected officers in April 1936. All were on the New York-Washington corridor except Christine Smith, second vice president from Detroit; and Dr. Eudora Ashburn, third V.P., Chicago. Other officers were Bethune, president; Clara Bruce, first V.P.; Mary Church Terrell, fourth V.P.; Florence K. Williamson, recording secretary (New York); Lucy Slowe, executive secretary; and Addie Dickerson, treasurer. Months later New Yorker Eunice Hunton Carter joined this group as parliamentarian. The next year, Clara Bruce replaced Slowe as executive secretary due to the latter's untimely death in October; and Charlotte Hawkins Brown claimed Bruce's old office, first V.P. The NCNW possessed a dedicated and stable officer corps, giving it constructive continuity over an extended period.

As 1937 waned, objective facts may have made some wonder if the NCNW was of consequence. Less than forty individuals paid a fifty cents registration and voted in the December business session. Only Phi Delta Kappa, the teachers' sorority, and the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses paid the $50.00 annual membership for national organizations. And only $18.25 lay in the treasury. Nevertheless, the fledgling council had proven to be advantageous.[38] President Mary Bethune definitely hit her stride again as chief of a national women's society. It was second nature. She lost little time publicizing the NCNW and her expectations. In April 1936, she informed the NYA's National Advisory Committee as follows.

> May I just state to you that we have organized recently, what we term the National Council of Negro Women. This council brings into one group all of the national organizations of women, educational, fraternal, religious, civic and otherwise. We are putting straight before this group

> the importance of this NYA program, and it has been most gratifying how the club women, and the fraternal women and the church women, through their conferences and through their sub-meetings throughout the country, have put into action their cooperation and helpfulness in carrying forward this program.
>
> I believe that the Negro women behind this program [are] going to be in the future a very great and influential power.[39]

The organization appeared advantageous also in weighing in before a Congressional Committee. On April 9, 1937, speaking for Bethune and herself as officials of the "National Council of Negro Women of America," Executive Secretary Lucy Slowe read a well-reasoned statement before the Senate Committee on Education and Labor, then considering the Harrison-Black Bill for federal aid to public schools (S.419, 75th Congress). She noted that 80% of almost twelve million African Americans live in states which legally mandate separate school systems and that in them, as of 1930, an average of $44.31 was spent on a white student and $12.57 on a black student. She presented other such comparisons to make the point that the NCNW recommended that the Harrison-Black Bill be modified to insure equitable benefits to blacks through five amendments, which she then enumerated. Concluding, she urged the committee to offer an unfavorable report unless the bill was amended, as suggested. The NCNW believed that as currently written, it would perpetuate a grievous discrimination against one-tenth of the U.S. population.

After the formal statement, Slowe took exception to the preceding speaker who testified that equalizing the number of days blacks and whites attended school would satisfy the issue of racial discrimination. She asserted that it would not, unless money spent for salaries, books, equipment, and buildings were equalized as well. Alabama Chairman Hugo Black asked that if Congress passed a bill requiring all public school children to attend school 160 days, "would that improve the conditions that you have testified about. . . or would it make them worse?" "It would certainly improve them," Slowe replied, "but it would not meet all of the situation." Each understood the other's point. In that scene, the NCNW had functioned in keeping with the mission of inclusion in national affairs. Large-scale federal aid to public schools, however, awaited another quarter century.[40]

As the council put down roots, more immediately gratifying than representation before a Congressional Committee was the dinner that year at the annual meeting. Held at the Harlem "Y," site of its founding, for the first time the organization branched out into day and evening sessions, beginning at 10:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. respectively. At the latter, 306 individuals attended, with more than 250 others turned away. While the program included several dignitaries, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt attracted the crowd. Bethune had been able to recruit her to speak because of their friendship, forged during the preceding two years around Bethune's work in behalf of the National Youth Administration, to which ER gave virtually carte blanche support. "We are happy to have present with us," Bethune announced, "the woman who has set the standard for unselfish service, deeds of kindness and sympathy, [and] best of all, a state of action. I am happy to present Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt." Speaking about fifteen minutes, the President's wife emphasized, "That the problem today and every day is a decent standard of living for everybody." Bethune remembered that she talked of "our children and how they are to be prepared to live in this world and what we can do to help." Afterwards, Columbia University student Julia F. Phifer presented to Roosevelt a gorgeous bouquet of roses. As the First Lady exited, "smiling and bowing," the audience serenaded, "Let Me Call You Sweetheart." Then over animated conversation, a delicious dinner was served.

Satisfyingly, Bethune surveyed all--the other speakers, the unison singing of "Silent Night," and men and women dressed in evening finery enjoying each other's company. The event would prove a harbinger of even larger inspirational dinner sessions. The Founder-President pronounced the occasion glorious. Recounting it for readers of her newspaper column, she observed, "We trust that this occasion will serve as a stimulant to the organizations who have not yet joined with us to come on in. . . . Write our Executive Secretary, Mrs. Clara Burrill Bruce, 209 West 125 Street, New York City." Bethune lost no opportunity to grow the NCNW.[41]

One reason for growing the organization was to facilitate the federal employment of African Americans. The Great Depression and historic segregation and discrimination consigned most of them, particularly women, to the lowest-paying positions even in government. In 1938, ninety percent of blacks on the payroll occupied custodial jobs; 9.5 percent, various clerical or fiscal jobs; and only 0.5 percent, sub-professional or professional jobs. Supposedly, an obvious way to escalate the number of blacks working in government beyond the custodial level was Civil Service. It stood at the portal to a great variety of jobs from junior clerk, junior typist, assistant messenger, to public health nurse and marine engineer. But Civil Service permitted entry to few people of color. In the first place, applicants were identifiable by race, for it demanded a photograph and an ethnic designation. Then it permitted bureaucrats to select a candidate from a field of three without requiring an explanation. These procedures allowed biased federal officials to exercise their biases. In 1938 Bethune had seen enough to move on Civil Service discrimination. She directed her Federal Council on Negro Affairs, popularly dubbed the Black Cabinet, to that end. But it would not do for a number of highly visible black federal workers to be identified publicly with this effort. Therefore as Edgar Brown, Charles Craft, R. O'Hara Lanier, Frank Horne, and Dutton Ferguson gathered a database to make a case against Civil Service, it occurred under the aegis of the NCNW. In this effort Bethune requested from Walter White permission for Henry L. Moon to review the NAACP's files for cases of discrimination, noting that she was keeping in touch with their Washington Attorney, Charles Houston. Seemingly, little came of this activity. While council members continued to view Civil Service as an employment route for more people of color, discrimination in that process often thwarted qualified black applicants. [42]

Getting on the Map: A White House Conference

In the spring of 1938 through a White House Conference, the council took a different route to employment and in so doing took a big step towards inclusion in the business of the republic. It considered the relationship of black women and children to appropriate federal programs with regard to their actual participation, the problems of integrating them, and the "extent of possible contribution of Negro participation" in administering them. For women like Philadelphia attorney Sadie T. M. Alexander, this move was overdo. She thought it perfectly reasonable for the government to employ, at minimum, at least as many black female administrators as black male. In accepting the conference invitation, she explained to President Bethune, "It has for many years pained me to realize that you are the only Negro woman holding an executive position in the Federal Government. . . .I have never been able to see how the Children's Bureau, for example, could operate without the advice and counsel of a competent Negro woman."

In addressing this serious employment issue, the NCNW President pushed unswervingly towards a White House Conference. "It took some real thinking and planning to conduct it," Bethune related. Firstly, she got on board Washington's chief women's advocate, Eleanor Roosevelt, who, about fifteen months earlier, had supported a Bethune national conference--at government expense--on the general status of African Americans vis-a-vis the federal government. As historian Joyce Ann Hanson explains, probably this 1937 conference further sensitized Bethune to the limited public roles of race sisters when cooperating with their male counterparts. Even with Bethune in charge, black men, heading all four conference committees, dominated the proceedings. To become collectively visible political doers, black women needed their own forum to air their own issues with regard to the government. For such a forum, Bethune recounted, "I had to go to Mrs. Roosevelt about two months ahead and sit and talk with her for an hour on the importance of this so as to bring it there under government surroundings and shrouded in governmental setting to give prestige and history to it." Then she had to summon NCNW Executive Secretary Clara B. Bruce to Washington for a few days before the meeting. Bruce remained afterwards, as well. Especially since Bethune's NYA commitments required her to begin a three-month tour of the West immediately after the event, Bruce's presence proved well justified.[43]

Other preparations for this precedent-setting "Conference on Governmental Cooperation in the Approach to the Problems of Negro Women and Children" underscored difficulties black women experienced in addressing the social welfare needs of African Americans. White women dominated the upper echelons of social agencies in the South, permitting only minuscule numbers of black women to advance. Then, too, for years private and public welfare agencies had deliberately avoided hiring "trained or even well educated colored women. . . on the theory that they would be difficult to manage." Forrester B. Washington, Director of the Atlanta School of Social Work, who communicated these observations to Bethune, could not recommend for the gathering a single trained black woman in South Carolina and Mississippi, partially for these reasons. Of the thirty-one women he suggested, only one, Sadie Gray Mays of Howard University, definitely made the parley. Doubtless others were prevented by the absence of travel funds.[44]

While social workers may have been few, the White House Conference did not lack participants. They appeared as serious citizens, smartly dressed for Washington's chilly air, some with furs, gloves, and hats as they stood in front of the old Interior Building on 18th and E Streets, Northwest. Arabella Denniston and Harriet Chaunault [West] of Bethune's NYA staff came; as did her personal supporters in most everything--Cecelia C. Smith of Washington and Mamie L. Anderson Pratt, New York City; and to a lesser extent, W. Gertrude Brown, Minneapolis. Then, the conference attracted two veteran clubwomen friends from Florida: Blanche Beatty Washington, distinguished Tampa educator, then living in Washington; and Eartha M.M. White, eminent Jacksonville social worker. Others present who had shared Bethune's activism in the National Association of Colored Women extended to its third and first presidents, Elizabeth Carter Brooks and Mary Church Terrell, who for the conference photograph stood on her left and right respectively. Distinguished National Association members from the southeast included Mary C. McCrorey, Charlotte; Lugenia Burns Hope, Atlanta; Ora Brown Stokes, Richmond; Margaret Davis Bowen, New Orleans; and Rebecca Stiles Taylor of Savannah, then living in Chicago. Other valiant women who knew Bethune from their joint National Association activities included Addie W. Dickerson, Philadelphia;

Lethia C. Fleming, Cleveland; Sarah Lee Fleming, Hartford; Julia West Hamilton, Washington; Nannie Reed, Chicago; and Clara B. Bruce, Addie W. Hunton, and Dr. Julia Coleman Robinson, New York.

Those with little visibility in the NACW, who as a group were younger and more enthusiastic about the National Council, included Crystal Byrd Fauset and Dr. Sadie T.M. Alexander, Philadelphia;; Sue Bailey Thurman and Dr. Dorothy Boulding Ferebee, Washington; Arenia C. Mallory, Lexington, Mississippi; Bessie Bearden, Dr. Eunice H. Carter, Florence K. Norman, Carita V. Roane, and Mabel Keaton Staupers, New York. On April 4, 1938, about thirty-five other women joined all those named to constitute sixty-five African American conference participants. At least that's the figure printed in contemporary press accounts and later, the NCNW's *Women United.*[45] Nevertheless, Bethune and the NCNW Executive Secretary claimed that two more had attended.

In the morning session at 10:00 a.m., NCNW conferees assembled "to formulate suggestions and prayers for presentation" at the 2:00 p.m. session in the East Room of the White House. National Council women "were of one mind on the thought of opening up opportunities for our qualified Negro women," reported Clara Bruce. After Lethia Fleming prayed movingly, "we asked that qualified Negro women--we always put that in--receive appointments, not merely because they are black and for that reason alone, but because they have the qualifications and because they are closer in touch with the problems of the members of their own group," she continued. "So we asked for placement on the planning boards and policy-making boards of the various governmental activities and their welfare services." NCNW conferees were requesting these things of high echelon government women. Listening were Mary Anderson, Women's

Bureau; Katharine Lenroot, Children's Bureau; Mary Dewson, Social Security Board; Dr. Louise Stanley, Department of Agriculture; Ellen S. Woodward, Works Projects Administration (WPA); and Eleanor Roosevelt.[46]

Later, Bethune recalled the conference glowingly: "Sixty-seven Negro women marching to the White House in their own right, standing on their feet expressing what they thought concerning their own people and the participation they should have in the general affairs of the country." "Sixty-seven women sitting down at the White House--the first time in the history of the world!" "I was glad to sit aside," she noted, "and see them [young Negro women] stand on their feet fearlessly presenting themselves and their thoughts, not coming as beggars, but coming as women wanting to participate in the administration of a human program." In fact, sixteen women, both young and mature, gave two minute talks on an aspect of the issues considered. "We presented the very best we had," Bethune declared, "because this country, you know, only knows a few of us, just a few. They don't know us," Bethune waxed on. "We went as one unit and the westerners [whites] wanted to know if these were the people of Booker T. Washington. Certainly around Washington, we want the people to understand that there are myriads of prepared Negro women and we want them to have contact with them and know them."[47]

Less than "myriads of prepared Negro women" aside, the findings of the conference were predictable. Still to Kelly Miller they revealed "a genuineness, simplicity and race statesmanship," typical of all Bethune's undertakings. Weeks before the meeting, Bethune had advised interested parties, "I find that we have very little representation in the administration of. . . and comparatively small integration into" federal programs designed for women and children. Conference participants concurred.[48]

> Our deliberations have indicated that Negro women and children do not participate in federal welfare programs to any extent in proportion to their need. It is our advised opinion that this condition is the direct result of our virtual exclusion from the administrative or policy forming offices of the various federal departments and bureaus set up for the administration and execution of programs for women and children.
>
> As good Americans, we should aspire to make our rightful contribution to the social advancement of our nation. We do not feel that this can be accomplished as long as so large a sector as we represent is so largely excluded from the full benefits of social welfare legislation.[49]

Given the magnitude of womanist exclusion from white collar government, the specific conference recommendations were modest. It proposed that *one* competent woman of color receive employment in an administrative post "strategic to the full participation of Negro women and children" in each of the following: the Children's Bureau, Women's Bureau, Federal Housing Administration, U.S. Housing Authority, and Social Security Board. But in the Bureau of Education, the conference requested "a Negro woman staff member in *each* department or bureau whose program is concerned with the educational well-being of women and/or children." Turning to health, the assembly noted, "In spite of the high mortality and morbidity rates among Negroes, the Bureau of Public Health Service has but one Negro health officer in its employ." Therefore it called for that agency to hire many more: an administrative officer, physicians, medical service workers, public health nurses, and nutritionists.

Also, the group considered the American Red Cross. It had "no national Negro administrative offices and only one Negro chapter," despite embodying the country's humanitarian effort generally and also morale-building for troops abroad. The conference recommended that the U.S. President, as the Red Cross ex-officio head, suggest to it the employment of an African American to facilitate integrating the race into its activities. When this was coupled with recommendations for the Public Health Service, it became clear that where only one African American was employed when others were desperately needed, or where no African American professional was employed in a general program, i.e., not specifically designed for women and children, the NCNW's priority was getting African Americans hired, regardless of gender.[50]

While the NCNW White House Conference was a grand experience or, as participant Addie Dickerson relayed to friend Nannie Helen Burroughs, "very good and. . . quite worthwhile," more than six months later it had netted virtually none of the desired jobs. Mabel Staupers reported that since the conference a black physician had been added to the New York Public Health Service, thus doubling black physicians there. Clara Bruce observed that the conference findings, had "really found a place in the minds and hearts of those women present, especially in the great heart of Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt." E.R.'s great heart beating under a Bethune influence, had facilitated the reorganization of Freedman's Hospital, including the employment of a new, highly qualified, superintendent of nurses.

Charlotte Hawkins Brown characterized the tangible conference outcome as "a mighty little bit, of course! 'Just a tip to Pullman porters,' as a man said to me recently about the new library given to Howard University."[51] Nevertheless, a multitude of African Americans clutched the inherent hope of such tips or symbolism. Appearing more pessimistic than Brown, columnist Floyd J. Calvin surmised, "In the case of these new demands by the [National Council] women, we fear this administration is too far gone, unless the unexpected happens, to see their plans bear fruit." He thought that since FDR's Reorganization Bill had been blocked, the best the administration could do was to work for the permanency of its earlier reforms.[52]

Regarding White House Conference results, Bethune exuded philosophical optimism. "We are doing something now we have never done before. We are getting some people in places they have never been before. We are getting a consciousness that people have not had heretofore," she declared to Council women in November 1938. "The pressure we have been making, the intercessions that we are making, they are finding their way. A door has been sealed up for two hundred years. You can't open it overnight but little crevices are coming, little leakages are getting through.".[53]

The conference did, however, impact the thinking of many and piqued interest in the NCNW. News of it splashed across the pages of the black press under banners such as the *Pittsburgh Courier's* "N.C.N.W. Thinks Race Women Are Needed In U.S. Set-Up," the *Black Dispatch*'s [Oklahoma City]"Mrs. Roosevelt Hears Seven-Point Program Outlined by National Women's Council," the *Carolina Times'* [Durham] "Negro Women Lay Requests Before Mrs. FDR," the *Tampa Bulletin*'s "Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune Calls a White House Conference," and the *Journal and Guide's* [Norfolk] "Women Seek More Federal Positions."[54] Also, the White House Conference propelled the NCNW to the forefront of the country's female race organizations, as Claude Barnett, head of the Associated Negro Press, implied to National Association President Jennie B. Moton. "I wanted to talk with you," he wrote, "about friend Mary's meeting. . . . There is no reason why you can't stand that far out in front and do the same thing if you care to. . . . Mary's doing a fine job and we help her, but NACW need not stand back of the National Council. The former has the mass of regular women to work with, and they are the backbone of any real movement."[55]

Regardless of lacking the "the mass of regular women," in just two and a half years, the

National Council outranked the National Association in popular thinking. Shortly thereafter, Bethune facilitated the first "close relationship" between the National Association and federal leaders. Thanks to the NCNW and its peerless president, as historian Paula Giddings concluded, "[black] women were counted among the new groups with legitimate demands that had to be taken into account on the national agenda."[56] The NCNW, now on the capital city's map, marched on towards the prize of significantly expanded race-gender empowerment.

Notes

1. Jessie P. Guzman, "The Social Contributions of the Negro Woman Since 1940," *Negro History Bulletin*, 10 (January 1948), 1-15; quote on Bethune, 10.

2. "Gigantic Organization of Negro Women," *Christian Advocate*, Southwestern Edition, 57 (February 20, 1930), 145.

3. "Statement of Mrs. Lucy Slowe, Executive Secretary of the National Council of Negro Women of America and Mary McLeod Bethune, President, National Council of Negro Women of America, Presented by Lucy D. Slowe," Hearings on Assistance to States in Providing Programs of Public Education, Senate Committee on Education and Labor, 75th Congress S. 419, February 9, 1937, *Senate Library*, Volume 547, 1937, 102-105. I thank Randy Boehm and Nicki Hume of University Publications of America for providing the citation and a copy of the Senate Hearings.

4. NCNW Proceedings of Annual Meeting, November 26, 1938, 38, 41, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 1, Folder 4, Mary McLeod Bethune Council House, National Historic Site, National Park Service; Tentative By-Laws of the National Council of Negro Women, April 9, 1936, NCNW Papers, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 1; NCNW Certificate of Incorporation, July 25, 1936, NCNW Papers, Series 4, Box 1, Folder 2.

5. NCNW Certificate of Incorporation, July 25, 1936; Constitution and By-Laws of the National Council of Negro Women, November 1949, NCNW Papers, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 1.

6. NCNW Certificate of Incorporation, July 25, 1936; NCNW Informational Statement, 1946, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 2, Folder 29.

7. "Mrs. Bethune Still Holds Dream of Super Unity of Women of America," *Omaha Chronicle*, December 4, 1936, Mary McLeod Bethune Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane

University. Italics added.

8. Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy A Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 167, 174, 198; Tracey A. Fitzgerald, *The National Council of Negro Women and the Feminist Movement, 1935-1975* (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 1985), 13-14.

9. Audrey Thomas McCluskey and Elaine M. Smith, ed. *Mary McLeod Bethune: Building a Better World, Essays and Selected Documents* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 199-207. Kelly Miller, "Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune Calls White House Meeting," *Journal and Guide* [Norfolk]. April 16, 1938, 8; Elaine M. Smith, "Mary McLeod Bethune," in *Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. Darlene Clark Hine et. al., (Brooklyn: Carlson, 1993), 121-124.

10. NCNW Minutes, December 17, 1936, Series 2, Box 1, Folder 2.

11. Elsa Barkley Brown, "Womanist Consciousness: Maggie Lena Walker and the Independent Order of St. Luke, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 14 (1989), reprinted in *Black Women in United States History: The Twentieth Century*, Vol I, ed. Darlene Clark Hine (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing Co., 1990), 170, 171, 172-173.

12. Christopher E. Linsin, "Something More Than a Creed: Mary McLeod Bethune's Aim of Integrated Autonomy as Director of Negro Affairs," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 76 (Summer 1997), 20-21.

13. Bethune, *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 10, 1937, 10.

14. Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: William Morrow, 1984), 221-222.

15. Linsin, "Something More Than a Creed," 21; NCNW Proceeding, November 26, 1938, 38, 40.

16. NCNW Informational Statement, 1942-1943, NCNW Papers [Italics added].

17. NCNW Informational Statement, 1946 [Italics added].

18. Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope* (New York: Broadway Books, 1998), 241-248; Robert L. Daniel, *American Women in the 20th Century: The Festival of Life* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987), 99, 104-108.

19. Elizabeth Lindsey Davis, *Lifting As They Climb* (Chicago: National Association of Colored Women, 1937), 74-76, 88-89, 179-183. See also Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 203-204.

20. White, *Too Heavy A Load*, 145-146. While references are made to the International Council of Women of the Darker Races in various texts on black women's organizations, I found that the achievements were meager while the symbolism was significant. See Elaine M. Smith, "International Council of Women of the Darker Races," in *Organizing Black America: An Encyclopedia of African American Associations*, ed. Nina Mjagkij, (New York: Garland Publishing, 2001), 278-281.

21. "Mrs. Bethune Still Holds Dream," *Omaha Chronicle*; Bethune to Mary Church Terrell, March 15, 1930, Mary Church Terrell Papers, Library of Congress.

22. *National Association of Colored Women Minutes*, 1928, 59-60; Smith, "Bethune," 118-119.

23. For Bethune's activism in the NCW, see, for example, *Year Book and Directory of the National Council of Women of the United States, Inc.*, (New York: By the Council, 1928), 32, 54, 59, 107-108, 120, 146-148; "Gigantic Organization of Negro Women," *Christian Advocate*; National Council of Women, booklet, undated, Terrell Papers.

24. *National Notes* [organ or the National Association of Colored Women], June 1925, 1; January 1928, 3; Bethune to Terrell, January 29, 1930, Terrell Papers.

25. Minutes of the Conference of Women, March 22, 1930, Mary McLeod Bethune Vertical File, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center.

26. White, *Too Heavy a Load*, 154.

27. Minutes of the Organizational Meeting of the National Council of Negro Women, December 5, 1935, in McCluskey and Smith, *Bethune: Building a Better World*, 168-173.

28. Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 209-210.

29. Daniel, *American Women*, 91, 113-115; McCluskey and Smith, *Bethune: Building a Better World*, 201, 226-229, 233-234.

30. Bethune quoted in NCNW Proceedings, November 26, 1938, 2; Other quote on New York by Clara Bruce, Ibid, 10; Minutes of Conference of Women, March 22, 1930.

31. Ibid; Minutes of NCNW Organizational Meeting, December 5, 1935; Elaine M. Smith, "Mary McLeod Bethune and the National Youth Administration," in *Clio Was a Woman: Studies in the History of American Women*, ed. Mabel E. Deutrich and Virginia C. Purdy, (Washington, D.C: Howard University Press, 1980), 151-154; "Mrs. Bethune : Spingarn Medalist," *Crisis* 42 July 1935), 202.

32. Julia Jones, "Talk O' Town," *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 8, 1942, 9, noted the initial

reaction to the NCNW; "Controversy On Forming New National Council of Women," December 1935, newspaper and specific date unidentified, Bethune Scrapbook, Mary McLeod Bethune Papers, Mary McLeod Bethune Foundation (BF), Bethune-Cookman College; "Dr. Mary Waring Assails New National Council," *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 21, 1935, 9.

33. "Mary McLeod Bethune Sends Appeal For '36," *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 4, 1936, 6; Bethune quoted in "Ignores Bitter Assailment of NACW Prexy," *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 28, 1935, 8.

34. Bethune advised Stewart not to change the time and place of the 1932 convention, but Stewart acted otherwise. Bethune wrote, "I am convinced, as I have said to you and to many of the women, that our National Association should hold its regular meeting at the regular time and in the place designated. . . .I am simply interested in the best good of our organization, this is all." Bethune to Stewart, October 28, 1931, National Association of Colored Women's Clubs Papers, Sallie W. Stewart File, National Assn. Of Colored Women's Clubs Headquarters, Washington, D.C; See "Biennial Conventions and Presidents," Wesley, *A Legacy of Service*, 529.

35. Bethune quoted in McCluskey and Smith, *Bethune: Building a Better World*, 133; complete speech in this volume from which quote is taken is "President's Address to the Fifteenth Biennial Convention of the National Association of Colored Women," August 2, 1926, 154-163; White, *Too Heavy A Load*, 156-157, 292-293.

36. Barnes, "Present Policies of NACW Are Wasteful and Unsound!" *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 24, 1937, 9; Julia B. Jones, "Talk O' Town," *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 1, 1941, 9; "Brown America in Review," *Brown American*," September-October 1941.

37. NCNW Certificate of Incorporation, July 25, 1936; NCNW Minutes, April 29, 1936; NCNW Minutes, December 17, 1936, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 1, Folder 2; NCNW Minutes, December 18, 1937, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 1, Folder 3. Quote about Slowe from Bethune to Terrell, October 22, 1937, Terrell Papers.

38. NCNW Minutes, April 29, 1936; NCNW Minutes, December 17, 1936; NCNW Minutes, December 18, 1937.

39. Bethune quoted in "Proceedings of the Second National Youth Administration Advisory Committee Meeting," April 28-29, 1936, in McCluskey and Smith, *Bethune: Building a Better World*, 218.

40. Statement of Mrs. Lucy Slowe and Mary McLeod Bethune, Senate Committee of Education and Labor, February 9, 1937.

41. While the organizational session was a luncheon meeting, the '36 session was a dinner meeting. NCNW Minutes, December 18, 1937; Bethune, "The National Council," *Pittsburgh*

Courier, January 1, 1938, 2.

42. Jessie P. Guzman, ed., *Negro Year Book*: 1941-1946 (Tuskegee Institute, Alabama: Department of Records and Research, 1947), 140-141; Minutes, Federal Council on Negro Affairs, August 26, 1938, and Bethune to Walter White, August 29, 1938, BF; NCNW Proceedings, November 26, 1938, 21-22, 52, 58-62.

43. Bethune to Terrell, March 18, 1938, Terrell Papers; Alexander to Bethune, March 28, 1938, NCNW Papers, Series 4, Box 1, Folder 9; NCNW Proceedings, November 26, 1938, 35, 38; Joyce Ann Hanson, "The Ties that Bind: Mary McLeod Bethune and the Political Mobilization of Women," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1997), 176-177; Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 229.

44. Forrester B. Washington to Bethune, March 2, 1938, NCNW Papers, (Series 4, Box 1, Folder 3).

45. A list of most black participants, with a photo, appear in Ruth Caston Mueller, ed. *Women United: Souvenir Year Book* (Washington, D.C: NCNW, 1951), 25. Some association members' names appeared in Wesley's *Legacy of Service* and Davis' *Lifting as We Climb*.

46. NCNW Proceedings, November 26, 1938, 11-13; Muller, *Women United*, 25.

47. NCNW Proceedings, November 26, 1938, 14, 39; "Women Seek More Federal Positions," *Journal and Guide*, April 16, 1938, 10.

48. Miller, "Bethune Calls White House Meeting;" Bethune to Terrell, March 18, 1938.

49. Findings of the Conference on the Participation of Negro Women in Federal Welfare Programs, NCNW Papers, Series 4, Box 1, Folder 6.

50. Ibid.

51. Dickerson to Burroughs, April 29, 1938, Nannie Helen Burroughs Papers, Library of Congress; NCNW Proceedings, November 26, 1938, 32-33, 38.

52. "Calvin's Digest: "Women Speak Up," *The Carolina Times* [Durham], April 23, 1938, 4.

53. NCNW Proceedings, November 26, 1938, 39.

54. *Courier*, April 14, 1938, 9; *Dispatch*, April 16, 1938, *Carolina Times*, April 16, 1938, *Bulletin*, April 16, 1938, Newspaper Clippings, BF; *Journal and Guide*, April 17, 1938, p. 10.

55. Barnett to Moton, April 16, 1938, Claude Barnett Papers, Bethune File, Chicago

Historical Society.

56. Wesley, *Legacy of Service*, 37, 113; Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 230.

Chapter 2

Womanist Leader in Government

Introduction

On September 6, 1940, when the United States stood chiefly as the Arsenal of Democracy in opposition to the bid of Germany's Adolph Hitler to subdue Europe, the Director of Negro Affairs in the National Youth Administration, addressed black college administrators in a regional Atlanta conference. Accurately, Mary McLeod Bethune noted, "The masses are depending upon the colleges and leaders." "You must look out beyond your college to help Negroes--assist to bring into operation everything that we possibly can bring to the Negro youth and to the Negro adult." She advised, "Prepare men [for jobs] that are in demand today. There is much for you to do; there is much more for you to get if you will get up and go after it." She advocated training youth both in the "upper tiers" and in vocational pursuits. Relative to the latter Bethune stated, "If we have no [NYA] facilities [in a given locale], have them [educational authorities] build shops that will take care of both boys and girls. Ninety-nine per cent of the work that was done by men is being done by women today in Europe. It is vitally important that we get these shops and facilities where not only boys are prepared but girls also." These programs would contribute to national defense. "This defense program," she insisted, "is the program we must think about in everything we are doing."[1]

While talking national defense in 1940, the Great Depression had provided Mary Bethune the prestigious platform on which she stood. On June 26, 1935 by Executive Order

7086 under the Emergency Relief Appropriations Act, President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the National Youth Administration with $55,000,000. Over eight years it spent $685,000,000 assisting more than four million people. Though on a smaller budget than the Civilian Conservation Corps, the other major federal outreach to Depression-era youth, NYA served far more individuals. It was lodged in three successive government structures: the Works Progress (Projects) Administration, the Federal Security Administration, and the War Manpower Commission. Even so, it functioned autonomously.

NYA had multiple objectives for youth aged 16 to 25. It was to extend work-aid-- in today's parlance, work-study--to youth in high school, college, and graduate school via local participating institutions; to give work-aid to out-of-school unemployed youth through the development of local projects; and to offer vocational training and placement services, concentrated in areas where they were especially needed. Thus, NYA focused on education, training, and employment. Additionally, considering that Germany's Third Reich aggressively promoted fascism in Hitler's Youth organizations, the agency's designers intended that it would help America's young people to understand and respect democracy.

With unprecedented and staggering unemployment during the middle of the Great Depression, youth deserved special attention because they constituted about one-third of all the unemployed and they lacked work experience and work habits vis-a-vis other workers. Of all young people reeling from hard times, black youth suffered most due to the marginal existence of their families before the economy crashed. While constituting 13 percent of the youth population but 15 percent of that population on relief, they found it extremely difficult to find a job even in agriculture or domestic and personal service, which had employed nearly two-thirds of all black workers. Desperate whites were increasingly taking this work. Bewildered, frustrated, and defeated, many had reason to succumb to hopelessness.[2]

Based upon the New Deal track record by 1935, it was problematic whether African Americans would receive anything approaching a fairness in NYA, especially because of its decentralized administration. Even through the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration was the first since Reconstruction to significantly facilitate aspects of equality for black people, intractable racial segregation and prejudice denied them equal benefits. The administration's macro-economic fixes in the form of the National Recovery Administration and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration operated in a flagrantly discriminatory fashion. The NRA exempted from its industry codes most occupational categories dominated by blacks. A majority of black textile workers, for example, received no government-insured minimum wage or maximum work hours. And NRA codes completely ignored household workers. Agriculture was no better. Due to AAA, white farm owners put many black tenants and sharecroppers off the land, while collecting increased checks from Washington for acreage reduction. When tenants and sharecroppers stayed, often owners squeezed them out of some AAA benefits. Marked unfairness to blacks ran through the Civil Works Administration, the Public Works Administration, the Civilian Conservation Corps, and other New Deal initiatives.

Nonetheless, in relation to others, African Americans garnered more benefits under New Deal programs than the older ones. New Deal public housing and emergency education initiatives approached equitable proportions for blacks.[3] In this respect, the undeniably liberal NYA emulated and exceeded them. In July '43, the *New York Amsterdam News* header about NYA was, "Agency Expressed True Democratic Idealism Throughout Its Existence." It rang true to most contemporaneous objective-thinking Americans. Two years earlier, one analyst even noted, “The National Youth Administration is the model from which all other government agencies should pattern their policies with respect to giving equal opportunities for advancement to capable and efficient Negroes.” “Many observers believed,” the *Atlanta Daily World* reported, “that it had given the Negro a fairer break [than other federal programs] from all points of view.” On the eve of its demise, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt affirmed, “In it [NYA] all young people have an even chance for improvement, and on [an] equal basis.” Scholars have generally concurred with the positive contemporary assessment, beginning with George Rawick in the 1950's, who noted that the agency “did not discriminate against Negroes,” offered them special benefits, and “practiced segregation only in areas where to do otherwise . . . would have brooked disaster.”[4]

Mary McLeod Bethune helped immeasurably to earn NYA its liberal reputation. According to the *Pittsburgh Courier*, she won “unanimous praise for her work in integrating Negro youth” into agency activities. One assistant remembered, “I have seen her run a veritable golden thread through the cold and objective operations of governmental agencies to reach out to youth all over the land and literally kindle a warm hearth for her co-workers of every race and creed.” In 1942, about the time that NYA abandoned its state-administered program in favor of centralization, Selective Service administrator Campbell C. Johnson lauded her contribution. “It is impossible to over estimate the value of the [NYA] program which you have projected throughout the country,” he declared, “or the power of the influence of your personality over American youth.”[5] While Bethune elevated youth, she functioned also in ways benefitting all of black America. Assisted by her Federal Council on Negro Affairs, better known as the Black

Cabinet, she brought into focus the problem of race, most visibly through two three-day black conferences under government sponsorship. The first was so impressive that attendance doubled at the second. After the latter, one judicious attendee told Bethune, "I know of no other person, man or woman who could have equaled your accomplishment in harmonizing the various and conflicting groups of our people, and guiding them into one common endeavor, cooperatively working for the good of all."[6]

"Womanist Leader in Government" places Mary Bethune inside the NYA and government in general. Working from a simultaneous orientation to both African Americans and women, she was a womanist, as discussed in Chapter 1. This chapter follows Bethune up the NYA ladder. As an adviser, she helped to formulate and insert into debate major measures she consistently championed to promote equality. As an Administrative Assistant, she intensified her efforts, traveling extensively to inspect NYA projects, to offer suggestions and inspiration for improvement, and to build support for the agency. As Division Director, she adjusted and promoted the transition from a depression-oriented program to one of national defense. Also, the chapter takes cognizance of Bethune's transcendence of a job description to become race leader at-large, meaning the most illustrious black New Dealer and the country's most influential black woman. Even when Congress terminated NYA, the afterglow of Bethune's identification with it and the First Family rebounded to her continuing leadership.

NYA Adviser

NYA was the leading equal opportunity agency in Washington. Its most influential policy-makers, particularly Administrator Aubrey Willis Williams, cast it that way. This Alabama native was "a great human being, a warm, fascinating person, and a man of tremendous courage and humanity," fellow Alabamian and New Dealer Clifford Durr recalled. Even before his Advisory Committee met, Williams, 45, had assembled black leaders, to solicit their input into the fledgling program. His own upbringing as a poor boy, his youthful imbibing of populist egalitarianism, and his early admiration of Abraham Lincoln and Jesus had predisposed this social worker to view sympathetically the plight of black people. As deputy to Harry Hopkins in the relief establishment, sobering experience regarding the extent of racism in federal programs strengthened his resolve to make NYA more responsive than other agencies to African Americans.[7]

Backed by both President and Mrs. Roosevelt, even though FDR referred to NYA as the "missus agency," Williams and a few others selected a National Advisory Committee to suggest policy and to enhance the stature of the program. Headed by Charles Taussig, president of the American Molasses Company, it consisted of representatives from business, agriculture, education, and youth. For example, those from New York included, attorney Adolph Berle, labor leader Sidney Hillman, religious counselor Bishop Francis E. McConnell, and businessman Owen D. Young. Among the lot of educators nation-wide were two people of color. The first was Dr. Mordecai Johnson, president of the federally-funded Howard University in Washington, and thus known to the federal educational bureaucracy. While he attended an early July NYA planning meeting, administering Howard afforded him little time for the youth program. In contrast, the other ebony educator, Mary McLeod Bethune, president of Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona Beach, Florida, embraced NYA as tightly as possible, for she immediately perceived its possibilities for assisting youth and for aiding financially-strapped black institutions, like her own. She was one of seven women on the thirty-five-member committee.

The others were aviator Amelia Earhart, New York; welfare administrator Mae R. Sargent, Los Angeles; teacher lobbyists Selma Borchardt and Florence Thorn Washington; trade unionist Julia O'Connor, Boston; and school superintendent Agnes Samuelson, Des Moines, Iowa.[8]

NYA planners probably designated Mary McLeod Bethune as an adviser because of her high profile status in Black America as a college founder-president. Josephine Roche, the Treasury Department's assistant secretary and chair of the six-member NYA Executive Committee suggested her name. On June 28, 1935, at the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's twenty-first presentation of its annual Spingarn Medal, the most prestigious recognition in Black America, Roche had been caught up in the recipient's achievement, oratory, and charisma. In short, in St. Louis, Missouri, medalist Bethune had dazzled her.[9]

Once Bethune had been mentioned for the Advisory Committee, Eleanor Roosevelt, the chief advocate of professional women in government, seconded the selection. Bethune had been among the presidents of affiliates in the National Council of Women whom ER had entertained at a buffet luncheon on Wednesday, December 7, 1927, at her New York City residence, 49 East Sixty-fifth Street. At the time her husband was governor of New York. She vaguely remembered that, for both she and her mother-in-law had been impressed with Bethune, the only African American at the luncheon. Moreover, the First Lady had received several letters from this black leader requesting her participation in affairs of Bethune-Cookman College and the National Association of Colored Women. Thus, ER was somewhat acquainted with Bethune and personally called the busy College President in Daytona Beach to invite her to join the youth advisory.[10]

Sensitive to the appalling status of Black America's young and passionately committed to public service, Mary Bethune jumped at the invitation to serve on the NYA committee. Although it demanded primarily attendance at meetings scheduled once or twice a year, the aggressive Bethune immediately transcended this limited role. On August 24, 1935, sixteen days after participating in the NYA "Conference on Negro Activities," she apprized the agency that her desk was piling up with letters and telegrams from around the country inquiring about the NYA programs for blacks. Consequently, she needed official government stationary and funds to communicate with her constituency by mail, telegram, telephone, and in person. Surprised, agency leaders, nevertheless, acquiesced to the requests of its sole black woman advisor. Although concentrating on Florida, Bethune traveled on NYA business in other states. She struggled to make this program fulfill America's greatest need, which was justice. In part this meant that the NYA had to become increasingly sensitive to "giving consideration and representation to the minority groups." After eight months, Assistant Director Richard Brown declared that she had worked as if on the NYA payroll in Washington.[11]

By then, the agency had responded positively to two of several proposals from Bethune for black leadership, her priority NYA issue. Prodded also by other individuals and the black press and in keeping with the practice of some other federal programs, it had employed in the Washington office a well-trained African American to facilitate black participation. Moreover, it had advised some state directors to employ a black assistant. With this, seemingly NYA had reached its 1936 limits in advancing African American professionals. When Administrator Aubrey Williams proposed that three or four blacks occupy regular staff positions, the Executive Committee balked.

Mary McLeod Bethune's standing as a mere adviser changed after meeting President Franklin D. Roosevelt for the first time on April 29, 1936. As the climax to the second conference of the Advisory Committee, its members went to the White House to present resolutions adopted on major youth issues. Since making no specific reference to African Americans, the committee compensated by permitting Bethune to give an oral report.[12] The most authentic indication of its contents was her statement to the committee earlier in the day. On May 5, 1936, the *Washington Tribune* confirmed this in "Mrs. Bethune Confers with President and First Lady for Two Hours at White House."[13]

While impossible to capture her inimitable public speaking impact, Bethune's statement offered--in addition to ideas--her typical manner of expression to influential whites. In such a situation, she acted for the greatest effect. In the first advisory meeting she had explained, "I think I am a careful and tactful person--I have tried to study how to make approaches and how to get along with people in order that we might get the best good accomplished."[14] Characterizing her approach, historian Christopher Linsin declares it a "combination of deference, flattery, and political pragmatism" indicating "a tactical awareness of how to best deal with white people--even liberal white people." "Bethune knew the power that race and a position of racial innocence cast in a moral context could impose," Linsin asserts. "By maintaining a moral posture, by asseverating loyalty, and by promoting black Americans as the innocent victims of white oppression, Bethune effectively used all the means at her disposal to secure the most she could from the Roosevelt administration." One thing was certain: Bethune's manner of speaking contrasted sharply with the style of all others on the youth advisory body, including Mordecai Johnson's.[15]

Assuredly, Bethune was grateful for the agency. "I want first of all to express on the part of the Negro people, our appreciation for the vision of our illustrious President, and his committee, in extending to the nation this NYA program," she declared. "In my opinion, and I think I am thinking in terms of thinking Negro people, I believe it to be one of the most stabilizing projects for the benefit of the American of tomorrow, than possibly any one thing that we have done. . . . The Negro views with deep interest the national program for all youth and approves most highly its objectives," she said.

Bethune then talked about NYA in relation to black involvement, emphasizing intangibles. "More particularly is the Negro interested in those phases of the program, which for the first time in the history of the nation, affords to Negro youth through Federal benefits, larger opportunities for education, productive work and cultural and wholesome recreation," she contended. This consummate Adviser enumerated NYA's most valuable outcomes for the African American as follows.

> 1. His optimistic awakening to the responsibility of citizenship made possible through the channels of training provided through the program of the National Youth Administration.
>
> 2. The fine spirit of cooperation of the general Negro public in fostering the objectives of the program of the NYA.
>
> 3. The fine spirit of cooperation and healthy participation on the part of Negro educators and leaders, and state and local NYA Administrators.

Bethune also saw an especially important result for the nation. Addressing the advisory committee Chair first and then the committee, she declared, "This NYA program has afforded the finest opportunity for interracial cooperation and understanding in these local communities, than any one thing that we have had come among us, particularly in our own southern section." But she immediately returned to a black focus, remarking that with NYA "touching the humblest black boy of the South, [there] has come a realization on the part of thousands of untutored Negro parents that the government does care,--for 'even the least of these.'"

Bethune tackled the torturous configurations of America's endemic racial segregation head-on. "In places where there is no need for a separate program, for Negro and white groups, we most heartily recommend the one program," she announced. "And in fields where it is necessary for us to have a separate program, we most heartily recommend a separate program, taking, of course, under advisement, the necessity of the proper leadership and guidance that we might be able to do the most effective work." In other words, Bethune advocated black leadership--or black self determination--in programs for blacks along with integration whenever that was possible. As discussed in the previous chapter, Christopher E. Linsin labels this two-prong ideological position integrated autonomy. It reflected the duality of being both of African descent and an American.

Bethune moved on to the centerpiece of her drive to facilitate NYA black participation. She asked for acceptance of this proposal: "Continuing the policy adopted by the committee at its previous meeting [August 15, 1935] regarding the appointment of qualified Negroes as members of staffs of state and local organizations; and the recognition of the value of Negro Supervision for strictly Negro work projects." Although already in place, thanks in part to her efforts, she continued to rationalize these policies. "May I advise the committee that it does not matter how equipped your white supervision might be, or your white leadership, it is impossible for you to enter as sympathetically and understandingly into the program of the Negro, as the Negro can do. Then it will give, also, the thing that we very much need nowadays," she contended, "that opportunity for the development of leadership among the Negro people themselves, and it is becoming more important that the right type of leadership be produced. They can only become efficient, by having the opportunity to develop and grow in participating in these programs."

Assuring her listeners that she understood the difficulty of implementing such practices, Bethune explained, "We recognize that great care and diplomacy are necessary in certain places to bring this idea to pass. I want you to keep that in mind, for all of these years I have been reared and working in a community where it takes the type of understanding leadership, to take steps slowly but surely. . . ." Regardless of difficulty, she warned, "The committee must not permit itself to be turned aside from the prosecution and realization of the major objectives of the National Youth program, chief of which is the development of, an appreciation of, citizenship values in the minds of American youth regardless of race, creed or color."

Then Bethune advanced a new initiative: funds earmarked to equalize college opportunities "in certain states where the Negro has not been able to obtain equal educational opportunities." She concluded, "I beg this Committee, whose position is so sacred in administering this program as handed down by our illustrious President, to keep eternal vigilance to safeguard the interest and welfare of all the youth of America. I speak particularly in behalf of the Negro youth."[16]

Having spoken directly to Franklin Roosevelt, Bethune's positive and optimistic report on black NYA participation touched him. "When I had finished," she declared in 1949, "I saw that tears were coursing down President Roosevelt's cheeks." No confirmation for this exists, however, and it should be noted that the memory of the hyperbole-prone Bethune sometimes faltered in recalling objective reality, as in the memoir, "My Secret Talks with FDR."[17] Regardless of the truth, ten days later, Bethune returned to Washington. Having been greatly impressed with her personality, work, and speech, President Roosevelt had directed Aubrey Williams to put her over NYA affairs for African Americans. FDR believed that she could advance the interest of black youth better than anybody else. When Williams related this, Bethune replied, "Why, Mr. Williams, I can never fulfill the requirements of such an office. I have my college to look after. I am inspirational and non-technical, while the President needs a real technician for that job." Williams answered, "We have thought of those matters. You may have as many technical experts under you as seems wise. Certain time-off can be arranged so that you may continue as president of your college. . . . There is no such word as 'can't' at this time. You must," he insisted. "Do you realize that this is the first time in the history of America that an administrative government office has been created for one of the Negro race? You must accept. We will do all we can to help you." After several long distance phone calls, Bethune took the job.[18]

Of course, more existed to the appointment than the preceding. In 1934, Eleanor Roosevelt had taken to heart a suggestion from Melvin Chisum, field secretary of the Negro Press Association, namely, that "A capable, intelligent Negro woman of fine training should be chosen, to see to it that the Negro people . . . be not ignored and left out," as frequently occurred in New Deal programs. ER was alerted to the difficulty of implementing this when Labor Department Secretary Frances Perkins would not hear of an ebony professional woman in the department's Women's Bureau, although Perkins had made it a point to attract talented white women to the agency. ER saw her opportunity in NYA with Bethune. She received an assent from Works Progress Administrator Harry Hopkins, who had legal jurisdiction over NYA. Another reason for ER's initiative was that the White House had been embarrassed with the deservedly bad press of the Civilian Conservation Corps on racial issues. It had failed to enroll many qualified black applicants, its discriminated against young black men who managed to enlist, and it habitually denied employment to black professionals. With a highly visible and revered African American in NYA, it hoped to avoid racial such headaches there.[19]

Bethune was a natural for the job. She needed to find new sources of funds for her college, which a base in the nation's capital afforded. More to the point, she found her arduous advisory activities rewarding. She desired greater involvement of black women in federal programs. She was the right age--in her 60's--for if older white women, like Molly Dewson, chief of the Women's Division of the Democratic Party, found their gray hair an advantage in dealing with men unaccustomed to females wielding power in Washington, gray hair appeared doubly valuable to Bethune. Most of all, however, Bethune possessed confidence in her ability to promote the full integration and participation of Negro youth in NYA. She envisioned the job as one of interpretation: interpreting the program to African Americans, and interpreting the needs of this minority to white Americans. She believed that her training and experience "peculiarly" fitted her for these tasks. And, too, FDR was comfortable with her. After initial reservations, she accepted the position of NYA chief Negro specialist.[20]

NYA Administrative Assistant

Mary McLeod Bethune joined the NYA Washington staff at a propitious time. Adolph

Hitler's Nazism, especially its notion of the master race, was causing thoughtful Americans to re-examine their home-grown racism. More importantly, the dynamics of new Deal philosophy as it related to the dispossessed and the underdog were catching up with its architect. Boosting these dynamics were northern black voters, Southern liberals, Northern radicals, equalitarian unionists, antifascist scholars, and civil rights partisans. Concomitantly, in nationalizing American culture, the New Deal exposed stark deviations from the norm, of which the South was the most arresting. The convergence of these factors had turned the New Deal to greater liberalism, heralded by Social Security and favorable labor union legislation.[21]

Within this framework, on June 24, 1936, Mary McLeod Bethune reported to 1340 G. Street, N.W., Washington D.C., as the full-time ranking specialist on Negro Affairs in the National Youth Administration. Knowledgeable African Americans welcomed the appointment. David D. Jones, President of Bennett College for Women, wrote Aubrey Williams, "Mrs. Bethune is one of our really great leaders. She has the confidence of the young as well as the old; of the radical as well as the conservatives." He believed that the appointment strengthened NYA considerably.[22]

Bethune projected herself as director of the Division of Negro Affairs. Technically this overstated her rank, for initially she bore the title Administrative Assistant in Charge of Negro Affairs. Yet there can be no doubt that from the beginning the Roosevelts intended for her to have the respect, resources, and latitude of a division director. Civil Service just took a while to catch up. In the meantime, Bethune, a woman of faith, operated as if the promise were reality. Certainly, she outranked the competent Juanita Saddler, NYA's other Administrative Assistant in Charge of Negro Affairs, who with Bethune's enthusiastic blessings, had relocated from New

York to Washington to take the NYA black job. Reporting to work on December 2, 1935, this former field secretary for the Young Women's Christian Association, had earlier cooperated closely with adviser Bethune. They favored the same strategies for facilitating NYA black participation. Seventeen days after the older woman's arrival, however, Saddler submitted a curt resignation, effective four days later.[23]

But an assistant was what Bethune needed. One had been promised with the job offer. She wanted a very capable individual--one she knew well and of unquestioned loyalty. She favored the youthful Dr. Frank Horne, whom she had known for years as a result of her friendship with his mother. In fact, he was "the one person she wanted." In light of this, Saddler's resignation was probably inevitable. Bethune wrote Horne at Fort Valley College in Georgia on July 9, 1936, two days before Saddler resigned. He was not interested. But enlisting the assistance of the head of Fort Valley, Henry A. Hunt--who worked also for the Farm Credit Administration in Washington--Bethune got Horne to the capital for an interview. Afterwards, he accepted the post, and intended to start four days later as Bethune had requested. But Aubrey Williams and his deputy Richard Brown disapproved. They supported a Mr. Henningburg, backed by President Frederick Patterson of Tuskegee Institute. At that point, having been released with difficulty from his Fort Valley job, Horne could not return because a replacement had been engaged. Thus he lacked the means to support his family. Moreover, he had already completed arrangements for housing in D.C. Williams and Brown had to back down. Apparently, Bethune had understood all along what it took to get the assistant of her choice. With the White House behind her, she had no compunctions about wheeling and dealing[24]

Probably remembering this introduction to staffer Bethune, as well as other vivid experiences, retrospectively Aubrey Williams observed, “She was a damn good politician. She knew how to use other people for ends she wanted to achieve. . . . She had good goals. They had nothing small about them. She used any means at hand to achieve them.” He probably would have concurred with historian Joseph P. Lash’s observation: “She [Bethune] had the most marvelous gift of effecting feminine helplessness in order to attain her aims with masculine ruthlessness.”[25] Even so, Aubrey Williams approved the work of his independently-minded black administrator, despite her periodic illnesses and split-time between NYA and Bethune-Cookman. Unquestionably Bethune performed essential tasks well, for the NYA Chief never let friendship, compassion, or obligation prevent him from dismissing unsatisfactory employees. In Bethune’s case, his concern was keeping her. When, after two years, the Bethune-Cookman College Executive Committee requested Williams to release her from NYA he bristled, “It is simply unthinkable at this time for her to leave her work with us. No one can do what Mrs. Bethune can do. . . . I prayerfully request that you agree to another year of joint service. The B-CC Committee did. [26]

While no one could do what Bethune did, nevertheless, she was not divine. During the depression-oriented program, she experienced the least success in NYA’s guidance and placement component, which involved unhelpful State Employment Services. Unable to find non-relief employment particularly in the North, African American youth lingered on NYA work projects when whites had moved on to other employment. After monitoring the trend for a year, Bethune became as emphatic as possible about instituting effective placement. She argued that it was so important that if necessary, cutbacks in school aid and work-relief should be effected to promote it. Even so, placement of ebony youth languished.[27]

A little fairer to African Americans than placement were work-projects for youth no longer in school. Initially, to get relief money into the pockets of needy youth quickly, Bethune pushed the projects easiest to start. They catered to the unskilled occupational status of blacks and the decided absence of local project sponsors. Consequently, black youth received work-training in domestic service, cooking, sewing, beauty culture, laundering, truck gardening, chicken raising, and the like. In 1937, some of these projects were staged better. In twenty-five southern communities, resident centers for youth from rural areas were established on or near black colleges. In '38, Bethune had seen enough of such projects. She reported to Aubrey William that black youth needed more advanced work-training, in better organized projects that were the equivalent of those for whites. With uncharacteristic candor she blurted, "There is no really outstanding NYA project for Negroes in the country." Then she argued for some involving metal arts and crafts, auto mechanics, aeronautical mechanics, large scaled buildings, and the like. She had to wait. In the meantime, she boasted about at least one project. Near Fort Valley, Georgia, existed "one of the most outstanding rural centers for Negroes in the country . . . ." she asserted, "a fine sample for all the states of the Union to follow."[28]

Obviously, Bethune failed to achieve equitable participation of African Americans in the work-training projects during the 1930's. And, while the black school-aid program never leaped to equality with whites either, as historian Allen Kifer convincingly demonstrates, Bethune significantly increased the black share. Her most impressive contribution to secondary school aid was devising the means to establish secondary schools in parts of rural Mississippi in order in order that black youth might then receive NYA in-school benefits. NYA transferred thousands of dollars from the regular school-aid fund designated for high school students to the college graduate fund for blacks in Mississippi in order to establish an intensive nine-month teacher education program, approved by the Mississippi Department of Education. High schools in Brookhaven, Clarksdale, Edwards, Greenwood, and West Point became program sites. In this way, an average of one hundred and twenty-five teachers per year became available to teach in rural schools during the program's existence. This development was so impressive that Congressman Arthur W. Mitchell included it in his speech on "the New Deal and the Negro" in the House of Representatives on October 14, 1942.[29]

Bethune obtained much more for blacks in the post-secondary aid program. In April 1936, she had begged the NYA Advisory Committee to endorse earmarked funds to equalize college opportunities for blacks. Also, in explaining to Aubrey Williams this need, she said, "I wish you would give me $200,000, but if you cannot, just give me $100,000, and I will be happy." Bethune added, "Give it to me on my desk; let me say where it will go. Let me be boss of that." Williams mustered little enthusiasm for this, but permitted Bethune a special graduate fund of $75,000 anyway. Blacks could apply for this aid if they had failed to benefit from the regular NYA allotment to their schools. If they attended predominantly white institutions, NYA demanded that a fair share of the regular aid serve them before any were eligible for special assistance. Thanks to this Special Fund, 7.4 percent of all graduate students NYA assisted in 1936-37 were black, compared to 2.5 percent the previous year.[30]

From the field came many requests to liberalize the use of college aid money. Concurring, Bethune used a portion of the Special Fund to make available graduate work in library science for one hundred students, because trained librarians were essential to schools seeking accreditation. Atlanta University, Fisk University, Prairie View College, and Hampton

Institute participated in this program. Moreover, with Special Fund support, Tuskegee Institute offered a commercial dietetics program to prepare students to become dieticians, chefs, and waiters. Those satisfactorily combining this curricula with more traditional ones, received a Bachelor of Science Degree.[31]

In dealing with school aid, work-training programs, and placement, Bethune endeavored to increase black participation at all levels. To facilitate this, she wanted more black advisory members at the national and state levels. She wanted more black supervisors of work-training projects at the local level. But the centerpiece of her drive towards equity was the employment of black administrative assistants to state directors "for administrative leadership of Negroes in the states," as she explained it. They were to interpret black needs to state directors and influence them to allot a fair share of benefits to African Americans.[32] The concept of black assistants to white directors was not original with Bethune, for in June 1935 the NAACP had requested that relief czar Harry Hopkins "appoint qualified black deputy administrators" to improve the chance of fair relief assistance to African Americans.[33] Bethune, however, made greater headway with the idea of black assistants than anybody else.

Although qualified blacks went after the job of assistant to a NYA state director--occasionally getting help from Congressmen--in some cases directors dragged their feet. Three years into the program, Indiana had not filled its top black position. State Director Robert S. Richey claimed the lack of administrative money to pay one. He could place an assistant, however, on a project payroll without annual leave and other administrative benefits. Emphatically, Bethune retorted, "But we don't want him of the project payroll." "If I can't get the kind of help I need to give you men [state directors] the kind of cooperation you need and intelligent cooperation--there is no use putting them [assistants] on. There is no use putting anybody on unless you pay them well." To get action Bethune promised to confer again with Administrator Aubrey Williams and his deputy that same day, September 29, 1938. Within a year, Indiana hired William Vernon Shields as the assistant.[34]

While some state directors with a significant black population hesitated to hire a black assistant, Bethune worked with those at hand. She assembled twenty-one of them, along with fourteen black members of state advisory boards and others, in Washington on February 11-13, 1937, to discuss specific problems of African Americans within the NYA. They came from north and south, but notably missing were assistants from Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas. Like Indiana, these states had not employed one and Mississippi and Texas would never get around to it. All agreed with Bethune on the necessity of hiring more African Americans in administrative and supervisory positions, even though the job of an assistant was far from easy. Some had insufficient salaries, inadequate office arrangements, and unfriendly state directors. Some experienced intimidation for communicating with Bethune's office, because their state directors interpreted it as disloyalty. Bethune was sensitive to the handicaps under which assistants labored. When they encountered sticky situations, she supported them as best she could. Sometimes she turned a spotlight on a given situation by having Administrator Williams or his deputy direct subordinates to investigate a grievance, as in October 1936 when one Florida black NYA employee saw his monthly salary dwindle from $150 to $100.[35]

Mary McLeod Bethune understood the assistants' situations well. She traveled enough. In her first year alone, she logged 40,000 miles through twenty-one states. On April 5, 1938, she started her most ambitious trip: a six-week tour of the West. At the various stops, typically she met NYA state directors, inspected NYA projects, and addressed audiences. Typically, NYA staffers treated her as general's personal envoy. In September 1936, on a visit to Birmingham, in addition to visiting all black projects, she met with the entire NYA state staff and project representatives. She marveled, "I was shown every courtesy. . . . I could not have imagined any such reception in Birmingham, Alabama." The reception, however, did not blind her to the absence of African Americans on the city's NYA staff. She left the "Magic City," determined to change that.[36]

In '38, the year that NYA aided 55,000 young African Americans, reports from Iowa and Oklahoma indicated that state directors responded well to Bethune, even though most had probably never had to receive an African American before, much less pay tribute to one. R.W. Tallman informed NYA Washington headquarters that Bethune "gave a most inspiring and helpful address. . . and gave many helpful suggestions to our local people" later at a tea. After touring black projects in Des Moines, she had a "very worth while" conference with the NYA staff. Tallman noted that in light of her suggestions, his program would improve. Additionally, he asserted, "Mrs. Bethune is rendering a splendid service and we appreciate her visit to Iowa." He wanted her to return. The Oklahoma director reacted similarly. After Bethune swept through, he exclaimed, "Her visit was an inspiration to me personally, to all of my people who came in contact with her, and needless to say she showed great leadership and great ability to stimulate, to lead her own people. They were profoundly impressed," Hornton A. Wright reported, "with her goodness, her kindness, and her ability to foresee the problems that confront us. . . . I hope she can return soon."[37]

Many of Bethune's trips were for the express purpose of addressing local, state, regional, and national assemblies. Through them NYA received enormous publicity. Sometimes pomp and circumstance marked her arrival. During the spring of '37, this occurred in Detroit when she went there to address the Scyades Club, a local black group. A delegation of distinguished citizens greeted her at the train station and directed her into a courtesy Packard car. A police escort accompanied her to City Hall where the Acting Mayor presented her the key to the city. People here and throughout the country responded enthusiastically to Bethune's gifted oratory. After she had thrilled three thousand in Columbia, South Carolina, on June 6, 1937, Wil Law Gray, Supervisor of Adult Schools, for the South Carolina Department of Education, noted "She [Bethune] made one of the best speeches I have ever heard." Upon hearing Bethune speak the next year at the University of Nebraska, Ernest F. Witte contended, "I do no know of any person on the staff of a federal agency who can do more to achieve the social ideals of the National Youth Administration than Mrs. Bethune. In that same year, Professor Mabel Carney of Columbia University's Teachers College informed Aubrey Williams that Bethune spoke to "an audience ordinarily critical and difficult to please in the matter of lectures." Nevertheless, "Mrs. Bethune stepped out like a queen and gave us one of the most stirring, dramatic yet withal level-headed and sensible addresses ever heard here in university circles," she reported. "I heard a number of important people say they had never listened to a better address."[38]

In 1938, Bethune discovered that her NYA Advisory Committee membership required travel too. She went to St. Paul, Minnesota for a regional meeting. There she continued to urge committee members to support democratic inclusiveness--"a fellowship, an understanding of brotherhood"-- which she deemed was the most important aspect of NYA. With trademark flattery and sincerity, she uttered "appreciation" and "gratitude" three times each. In the process, she tugged on heart strings. "When I look into the rural [black] districts of Georgia, and Florida, and Alabama, and Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas, and I think of what is being done, the awakened attitude, the enlivenment, oh, [of] that famished group that has been waiting for all the years for a group like this, for a program like this, for a President like this, for a leadership like this, to come and to administer to them, I cannot express to you our appreciation," she claimed. "We go way back up in the woods to those little cabins [where youth live]. You see their old mothers and fathers," Bethune averred, "oh, so often getting on their knees thanking God for the program of the National Youth Administration."[39]

Transcending the NYA

During the Roosevelt presidency, Bethune often fused NYA functions with other activities, just as "From Day to Day," her 1937-38 weekly *Pittsburgh Courier* column often reported youth agency news coupled with other concerns.[40] Bethune exercised influence enough to have a group of busy African Americans in Washington--government employees, ministers, civil rights leaders, and others--assemble without knowing the business at hand, recalled Baltimore civil rights activist Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr. "'A lot of people have asked, why are we here?' And she [Bethune] said, 'You are here because I called you to come. And whenever I want you to come I will call you, and I expect you to come whether I want anything important or not.'" Mitchell 's memory tallied with that of Howard University sociologist E. Franklin Frazier, who remarked that Bethune "became more domineering and arrogant as she acquired power and prestige." He saw this in her presiding over meetings and her control over organizations. These assessments point to the controlling side of Bethune, which is seen best in her domination of Bethune-Cookman College, as historian Sheila Flemming elucidates in a history of the college.[41]

They also represent exceptions to Bethune's tendency to speak tactfully in public, typically to improve a given situation for blacks. For just as the President of the Julius Rosenwald Fund had pegged her, "It is as a Representative of the People that Mrs. Bethune thinks and acts. She knows she is a Public Institution." Certainly, this rang true in August 1939 when she "electrified" the New Negro Alliance's long-standing picket line around a Washington, D.C. drug store chain. Bethune carried a sign reading, "PEOPLE'S" [name of store] UNFAIR--NO COLORED CLERKS IN COLORED NEIGHBORHOODS--STAY OUT!"[42] In the role of "Public Institution," or race leader, Bethune insisted on respect, participated in both ad hoc affairs and organizations of some longevity, submitted numerous recommendations to administration officials, and, like her NYA boss Aubrey Williams, showed herself a true believer in Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt.

A Matter of Respect

As a "Representative of the People," Bethune indicated to disrespecting individuals that she deserved better, particularly when they chose to address her as "Mary." The South required that blacks call whites by titles, usually Mr., Mrs., or Miss; white whites addressed blacks by their first names or boy, auntie, and the like, often ignoring age in doing so. This regimented behavior was designed to continuously affirm that blacks were inferior and to have blacks, themselves, acknowledge such. Regarding ebony women, it amounted to a weapon contributing to sexual exploitation. Whites used it in conjunction with other strategies, including different legal sanctions against rape when committed against white and black women, and the assignment of single toilet facilities for both black men and women. Collectively such weapons bolstered the myth of the loose character of minority women so as to justify denying them considerations bestowed upon white women. Although race etiquette, per se, lacked legal underpinnings, nonetheless, southern policemen and judges enforced it under "disturbing the peace." Sometimes they and others upheld it also through economic intimidation and physical terror.[43]

Like other middle-class black women, Bethune winced when whites used her given name because of race. In 1940 when she was hospitalized at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, for example, she chided a young white nurse, "I have trained hundreds of girls like you. You are not by friend or relative, that you can call me by first name." Interestingly, when addressing Bethune some whites circumvented the "Mrs." by substituting "Madame." Consequently, some blacks followed. But for a few strangers unfamiliar with either Mary or Madame, the handle of choice was "Auntie." Among the several anecdotes about this, one featured a patronizing Pullman conductor who said, "Auntie, give me your ticket." Bethune remained silent. He repeated it. Then looking up demurely she inquired, "Which of my sister's sons are you?" In a variation, a gardener attempted to stop Bethune's trek across the White House lawn. He yelled, "Hey, there, Auntie, where y'all think your goin'?" After getting him straight, she strode on imperiously.[44]

In Birmingham Alabama, during the initial conference of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare in November 1938, Bethune put the necessity for proper titles on record. The details of the incident vary according to the writer. Close Bethune friend and trail-blazer Eugenia Hope recalled it this way. On the second day of the conference, Bethune seconded a motion. The chair, race liberal and Birmingham judge Louise Charlton, acknowledged her with "Mary." Seemingly, that passed Bethune by, Hope related, but not people on all sides of her. They repeated incredulously, "Mary?" From behind came the remark, "We can straighten that out later." But those closest to Bethune, including Hope, advised, "Do it now!" By then Bethune had realized what had happened. She got the floor and stated that she didn't want "Mary of Florida" to be recorded; she was "Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune" and desired that in the minutes. "Well, the house came down," Hope told the 1938 NCNW annual meeting. "You might not have known that it was in the South. The white and colored people just applauded her." While later generations might think the incident inconsequential, white Alabama race liberal Virginia Durr reported that at the time it constituted "a big dividing line." An African American woman had insisted upon and received the title of "Mrs." in a public meeting in Birmingham.[45]

Ad Hoc Affairs

As black people's representative, Bethune's light shone brightest in Washington, and then throughout the country. In 1939, for example, on her schedule tangential to NYA were both the typical and unusual. On November 27th of that year, as "a representative of the Negro race," Bethune sat on a panel of seven at a town hall meeting in New York for "America's Town Meeting of the Air." The National Broadcasting Company carried the program nationwide over radio. At a time when communism and fascism blighted Europe and the Nazi blitzkrieg had launched World War II, the panelists spoke on "What Does American Democracy Mean to Me?" "Democracy is a goal toward which our nation is marching," Bethune asserted. "It is a dream and an ideal in whose ultimate realization we have a deep and abiding faith." That was something to ponder.[46]

Earlier that spring, during April 26th to May 10th, Bethune attended the 900-delegate Methodist conclave in Kansas City, Missouri. The South Florida Conference of the Methodist

Church had sent this Methodist College president as a delegate. It was a historic gathering, reuniting mainstream northern and southern branches of Methodism that had split in the antebellum period over slavery. During the proceedings, when the conference secretary uttered the epithet “nigger,” Bethune, one of 44 African American delegates, immediately protested, as did another. This elicited the Secretary’s loud apology. On the last day of the meeting, on another note, Bethune presented roses to the Atlanta area’s departing white bishop and his wife as a token of the love, appreciation, and confidence of his African American flock. A black bishop was destined to replace him because the new church had segregated virtually all African American members--about 300,000--into their own administrative jurisdiction.[47]

In Washington during ‘39, the most momentous event for many was contralto Marian Anderson’s legendary Easter Sunday concert at the Lincoln Memorial. The site came at the last minute. Desiring to host an Anderson concert but having no adequate facility, the Howard University Concert Series Committee first requested Constitution Hall. Its owner, the Daughters of the American Revolution, refused because Anderson’s dark skin. Disgusted, Eleanor Roosevelt resigned from the organization. Then, the District of Columbia school board barred Anderson from the Central High School auditorium, again due to race. At the Metropolitan AME Church on M Street, between 15th and 16th Streets Northwest, the Marion Anderson Citizens’ Committee led a protest rally against this action. Bethune was a featured speaker. Anderson had then planned to sing in a municipal park, but Interior Secretary Harold L. Ickes, rescued her from that by offering the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

On April 9, 1939, an unprecedented seventy-five thousand people, Bethune included, thrilled to a voice heard “once in a hundred years.” Bethune believed “the reverence and the concentration of the throngs told a greater story" than the numbers and "magnificent voice." "Something happened in all of our hearts," she confessed to Attorney Charles Houston. "It cannot be described in words. There is no way." "Through the Marian Anderson protest concert," she maintained "we [African Americans] made our triumphant entry into the democratic spirit of American life." On the evening of the concert, when Anderson greeted seven hundred guests at a Howard University faculty wives' reception, Bethune stood in the receiving line beaming.[48]

Prior to '39, Eleanor Roosevelt had begun to extend Bethune's role as a representative of the people. She suggested her, for example, for membership on the President's Special Committee on Farm Tenancy.[49] Formulated in November 1936, it was to develop "a long-term program of action to alleviate the shortcomings of the farm-tenancy system." Considering that tenancy was often coupled with soil depletion and low living standards, much needed alleviating and for many people. More than half of the 6,800,000 farmers in the U.S. were tenants. They consisted of cash renters, share tenants who supplied more than labor for a split of crops with owners, and sharecroppers who offered only their labor for crop splits. The 700,000 Southern black tenants were of particular interest to the blacks on the committee: Fisk University sociologist Charles S. Johnson, Tuskegee Institute President Frederick D. Patterson, and Mary Bethune.

Bethune's appointment to the Tenancy Committee occasioned unfavorable questioning. Mack Robb of Daytona Beach wrote to Washington that the committee needed a white Floridian also because as an African American, Bethune could not represent the state's white population. The White House replied that the selection of committee personnel was made with utmost care and without regard to state lines. "Mrs. Bethune was chosen because of her interest in and knowledge of Farm Tenancy as it concerns the Negro population and not because she was a resident of Florida." Here was formal acknowledgment of Bethune's broad race representative function.[50]

As a Tenancy Committee member, Bethune spoke for "the man fartherest down." She emphasized "that mass of tenants who do not know when they are protected. I am thinking of the people," she declared, "who have not had sufficient training to make their own arrangements. . . . I am hoping that in the set-up of this program and your findings here, that something may be thought out that will go as a safeguard and a protection for the helpless mass of tenants." She continued, "Now, that to me is a very definite and serious point. My own experience, my own contacts with the masses of my own people in this field of living, makes this to me one of the most important things that this Committee should think about." In response, Agriculture Secretary and Committee Chair Henry a. Wallace suggested that the Resettlement Administration's county supervisors and their associates, the home supervisors, were already applying themselves along such lines. But Bethune countered quickly that they were too few. She wanted enough supervisors to match the needs of the most disadvantaged rural Americans.

A few weeks later, Bethune submitted to the committee specific recommendations bearing upon potential beneficiaries of federal assistance. These dealt with peonage, education, the selection of farm operators, participants in the homestead and rehabilitation loan programs, and local boards of arbitration. The thrust of these suggestions--greater federal supervision at the expense of states and localities--offered that "safeguard and protection for the helpless mass of tenants" about which she had spoken.[51] In line with this, the committee wrote into its report that civil servants free from local political domination should administer tenancy funds. Subsequently, Roosevelt asked Congress to enact this provision into law. On three separate occasions, however, Southern Congressmen blocked it. They and their cohorts preferred that tenant aid be dispersed on the basis of political expediency, not need, and in such a way that blacks received the least.

Despite this development, some African American farm tenants experienced greater federal assistance when the Farm Security Administration was established in July 1937. It originated, in part, to implement the committee's recommendations as encompassed in the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act. The South's foremost interracial pioneer Will W. Alexander, who had conceived of the Tenancy Committee and had occupied its center until the work culminated in a final report, headed the new FSA. It made special efforts to reach black family farmers. When in 1939, representative black leaders, including Bethune, formally examined the agency's work, they were encouraged. Yet with only a minimal budget relative to the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, the imperative to consider credit worthiness in making loans, and the necessity to acknowledge political power realities, Alexander's program could help only very limited numbers of rural indigents.[52]

Organized for Years

While the Farm Tenancy Committee was a one-time effort for Bethune, the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, existing for ten years, offered an opportunity for her to function over an extended period as a "Representative of the People,"sometimes substantively and sometimes symbolically. During November 20-23, 1938, through the leadership of Joseph

Gelders and his National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners, it drew together in Birmingham, Alabama, the major city of the New South's industrial order, Southern liberals of all stripes and especially those close to the Roosevelt Administration. Numbering from two hundred to three hundred, blacks constituted about 20 percent of the total. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt had insisted on their presence and Bethune's in particular. In the warm glow of each other's company, amid prayer and singing and speeches from the likes of ER, University of North Carolina president Frank P. Graham, and U.S. Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black, these liberals--educators, laborites, managers, politicos, journalists, students--found aid and comfort. Using as a primary reference the federal government's *Report on the Economic Conditions of the South*, by way of resolutions they expressed opinions on agriculture, industrial problems, civil liberties, and state and federal initiatives. The excitement was so great that it was generally understood that this middle class, white-led organization would be permanent. Frank Graham was elected chairman. Thirteen vice-chairmen, each representing a southern state were elected also; and to give blacks visibility, two vice chairmen at large, Mary Bethune and John P. Davis of the National Negro Congress. Vividly summing up the gathering, writer-participant Sterling Brown exclaimed, "The South is on the move. The hind wheel may be off and the axle dragging, but the old cart is moving."

The conference wanted to avoid isolating race as an issue. If it were perceived as a civil rights organization, its hope of a mass following was doomed and even many liberals would leave. Consequently, delegates registered no complaint about institutionalized racial segregation and used the term racial justice, as opposed to racial equality. In the process of elevating the region as a whole, the Southern Conference would improve the quality of life for blacks. The

Old South wouldn't have it. On the second day of the proceedings, Birmingham Police Commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor--the same lawman who would achieve notoriety in the 1960's for abusing civil rights demonstrators--and his entire force converged on the City Auditorium to enforce the city's segregation ordinances.[53] Eugenia Hope believed that Bethune's insistence on being recognized as "Mrs." explained the timing of the police.

Although blacks boycotted the Monday evening session in the auditorium, the next day the conference settled into whites on one side of the aisle and blacks on the other. Bethune entered on the arm of Aubrey Williams. "You know what those white people thought [about a white man escorting a black woman in a public forum]," Hope related to race sisters. "And Mrs. Roosevelt was there and when Mrs. Bethune came in, Mrs. Roosevelt almost took her in her arms. There wasn't a sound; they [whites] were so shocked." Hope also ticked off conference resolutions particularly relevant to African Americans: no more SCHW meetings in cities that enforced segregated seating; anti-lynching legislation; and justice for "the Scottsboro boys," who had been unjustly incarcerated in Alabama for raping a white woman.[54]

Other SCHW biennial meetings lacked the drama of the first one in Birmingham because no ruckus developed over who would sit where. White courageous leaders, whom other whites frequently ostracized, viewed "economic equality as the most important issue for eliminating all the South's major ills." SCHW's lasting contribution, according to scholar Linda Reed, was "raising the national consciousness toward creating a new and democratic South and the more specific issue of civil rights." While using radio talk shows, numerous speeches and conferences, it relied primarily on educational material and written protest. The organization led the way in advocating what could and should be done, even though the later black direct action protest movement was the critical factor in turning idealism into reality.[55]

Bethune stayed with SCHW almost its entire life span. On April 20, 1942, in Nashville, the organization presented her with the coveted Thomas Jefferson Award, a recognition of the Southerner who had contributed the most to the South. It gave the same honor to Frank Porter Graham. Media magnet Eleanor Roosevelt presented the prizes. Mary McLeod Bethune's award marked a psychological advance for the South. It contributed to whites' increasing awareness of the possible legitimacy of black heros and heroines on par with those of contemporary whites. After 1942, Bethune became more active in the Southern Conference: attending board meetings, contributing to the Washington Committee, and writing for *The Patriot*, the official organ.[56] To bolster its sagging finances and recruit more members, she voluntarily undertook a tour of five southern states, speaking in nine cities between January 16 and 27, 1946. She provided the organization a shot in the arm that it needed.[57] Two years later, SCHW disintegrated over members' decidedly different preferences in the '48 election. Some favored Henry Wallace; others, Harry Truman.

While an asset to the SCHW, Bethune was critical to focusing attention of racial inequities in the nation's capital during the Roosevelt period. She did so as a self-appointed race leader in Washington, beginning shortly after her arrival there in '36. Actually, the government had previously filled such a position. As early as June 1933, when the government's immediacy in average citizens' lives was becoming ever more apparent, interracialists Will W. Alexander, Edwin Embree, and Charles S. Johnson conceived of a race representative at large, or "a generalissimo of Negro welfare," within the federal bureaucracy. It required someone in government to keep tract of proliferating federal programs, to devise strategies by which blacks could obtain a fair share of benefits from them, and to work towards implementation. With FDR approving the concept, a white Atlanta liberal became "Special Assistant on Negro Affairs" in Harold Ickes' Department of Interior. Though rendering yeoman services, Clark Foremen, later a president of the SCHW, was unable to effect coordination across departmental lines, as reflected in the demise of the Interdepartmental Group on the Special Problems of the Negro shortly after its creation in 1934.[58]

Recognizing the impossibility of succeeding as an at large race leader without expert assistance from highly educated and clear thinking younger people who understood government operations and were predisposed to advance black interests, Bethune organized the Federal Council on Negro Affairs, generally known as the Black Cabinet. In this way, as one contemporary noted, "She made sure that she was constantly surrounded by able people. This was important because her entire operations depended on people who could advise and counsel her." Continuing, Reginald A. Johnson of the National Urban League, declared, "This was the secret of Mrs. Bethune's success, because she was a good listener and able interpreter of the suggestions given to her by many able people."

The Black Cabinet was made possible by the New Deal's recruitment into government of black advisers. As an assistant to Clark Foreman in the Interior Department, Robert Weaver, with a Harvard doctorate in economics, entered first. More than a hundred black professionals followed. They personified the regeneration of an African American political presence that had been lacking in the nation's capital since the end of Reconstruction. Collectively, these appointees were possibly the most important racial symbol of the New Deal. Working closely with the NAACP's Walter White and the YMCA's Channing Tobias, and other national leaders, the Black Cabinet became “the Washington arm of national Negro leadership.”[59]

“Coordinating the efforts and the work of the federal government agencies represented in the membership,” was the aim of Bethune’s Federal Council. Its very existence tended to sensitize government officials and others to civil rights. This Black Brain Trust affected public attitudes notably through considerable input into the two NYA-sponsored national conferences in the 1930's. Specifically, in that decade it grappled most with Civil Service discrimination. It contributed to the new Civil Service rules in the next decade that prohibited policies permitting the most flagrant discrimination: an application with photo and race designation; and the rule-of-three, which allowed an employer to by-pass the most qualified job applicant by hiring any of the top three.

Informality riddled the Black Cabinet. No government authorization existed for it and members were not officially designated liaisons of their employing agencies. Although members made studies, submitted reports, and sometimes listened to speakers, the organization was mostly an informal networking of minority personnel to advance common concerns. When on an announced schedule, the council met monthly. Cognizant that usually off-the-record deliberations best promoted its interest, the group chose to forego letterheads and kept paperwork to a minimum.

Scarce documents, however, identify the Black Cabinet’s membership as it existed in September 1939. It included twenty-seven men and three women in seven traditional agencies and in seven more recent ones created by the New Deal. In the former were the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Interior, Justice, Labor (including the District of Columbia’s Employment Service), Post Office, and Treasury; in the latter, the NYA, Civilian Conservation

Corps, Farm Security Administration, Farm Credit Agency, Wages and Hours Board, U.S. Housing Authority, and Works Progress Administration. The New Deal agencies employed the majority of council members. The three officers resided in them: chairperson Bethune in NYA, vice-chairperson Robert Weaver in Housing, and Secretary Dutton Ferguson in WPA. With five and four members respectively, Housing and the WPA claimed the most council members.

The cabineteers carried different job titles--civil engineer, junior counselor, editor, attorney, supervisor--but the largest numbers were "adviser" and "assistant." Job titles aside, at least two-thirds worked on the black phase of their employers' programs. As such, they endeavored to influence their respective agencies' policies in the interest of blacks; to respond to complaints, suggestions, and inquiries from their constituency; to increase black government employment; to collect and disseminate data, generally on black progress; and to boost the New Deal. During the second world war, cabinet members were pre-occupied with promoting black employment both in government and war industries.[60]

Mary McLeod Bethune's own needs in NYA prompted her to convene the first Black Cabinet meeting on August 7, 1936. Speaking to Weaver, Dewey Jones, and H.L. Trigg from the Interior Department, her NYA assistant Frank Horne, WPA's Alfred E. Smith and J.A. Atkins, and Labor Department's Lawrence Oxley, she explained, "I have been meeting large numbers of interracial groups . . . .where more than 2,000 people gathered . . . . I have been asked what the Negroes are doing in Washington." To answer this repeated query, she proposed that they distribute "a piece of literature."

But Bethune had invited the seven bureaucrats to her abode at 316 T Street in northwest Washington for broader and long-range purposes. "We have a greater opportunity than the representatives in the individual states. We have had a chance to look down the stream of the forty-eight states and evaluate the type of work and positions secured by Negroes," she announced. "The responsibility rests upon us. We can get better results by thinking together and planning together. We must think about each other's problems," this leader maintained. "Let us band together and work together as one big brotherhood and give momentum to the great ball that is starting to roll for Negroes. . . . .I feel helpless without the fellowship, interest and cooperation of all of you."

Working together meant that each person shared specific facts and experiences derived from his office; conversely, it meant that each forgot about his particular job in order to "think, in terms as a 'whole' for the greatest service to our people," Bethune declared. Other than publicizing African Americans in the New Deal, Bethune proposed that the council try to obtain outstanding black projects. "The exceptional things have been done for white people," she noted. "Let us get some of the exceptional things done for the Negroes." Also, she wanted the council to prioritize black needs. This had to be a collective endeavor. In general terms, the council was to keep before the government and the general public, white and black, that the nation's largest minority was an integral part of the country, participating in government programs, and requiring greater equity in services.[61]

Just as Bethune called the Black Cabinet into being, an achievement that Robert Weaver confessed that he had unsuccessfully attempted, she held it together over seven years with in iron fist inside a velvet glove. She received a big assist from Weaver, particularly in the 1940's when she fought debilitating illnesses. They got along well. In 1938, when Weaver wanted her Assistant Director to join his housing staff, Bethune asked Eleanor Roosevelt to informally say to the Housing Authority Chief Nathan Straus that she favored the move. This sealed Frank Horne's transfer. Robert Weaver, the future Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, led his council colleagues in developing analyses and program proposals. While encouraging that process, Bethune listened attentively at meetings, for her forte was articulating and dramatizing ideas. Referring to this intrepid leader as the voice of the Black Brain Trust, Weaver reflected, "Mrs. Bethune used her contacts and personality to dramatize the problems we faced so that our proposals would be considered. She supplied a flamboyant and well connected personality to render our efforts newsworthy . . . . she was extremely effective." [62]

At times, however, Bethune flailed the wind, even while demonstrating her willingness "to go to the front" in critical circumstances, as in 1942 for Odell Waller, a black Virginia sharecropper who killed his white landlord under extenuating circumstances. When punishment came down to the wire, writer Roi Ottley reported that Bethune called the White House at one o'clock in the morning seeking a stay of execution. She reached Eleanor Roosevelt, who awaken the President. After a consultation with the Attorney General, the White House informed Bethune that the federal government lacked jurisdiction in the matter. The next morning, Waller was executed.

On other occasions, as the voice of the Black Cabinet, Bethune's words to the influential reaped positive results. In the same year as the Waller case, powerful whites wanted Detroit's Sojourner Truth federal housing project previously certified for African Americans changed to white occupancy, and pressured Washington accordingly. The government acquiesced. At that point the Black Cabinet intervened, putting the welfare of constituents above concern for members' jobs. By cooperating with the black press and political and religious leaders, it orchestrated the indignant arousal of blacks throughout the country. The black protest and betterment groups petitioned the Housing Authority, even sending people to Washington. A crisis was developing. According to plan, Bethune contacted Eleanor Roosevelt. Shortly thereafter, the Sojourner Truth Homes became available to black tenants. The work of the Black Cabinet elicited comment on the floor of the House of Representatives. Having worked unsuccessfully for a white Sojourner Truth project, Michigan Congressman Tenerowicz, inquired if "the membership of the House must consult this new agency, the Black Cabinet, regarding any and all racial questions."[63]

One Proposal after Another

The Black Cabinet was indispensable in staging two influential black meetings during the New Deal, called the National Conferences on the Problems of the Negro and Negro Youth. They were held on January 6-8, 1937, and January 12-14, 1939, at the Labor Department, site of several NYA Advisory meetings. Administrator Aubrey Williams had balked when Bethune initially proposed that NYA sponsor such a gathering because an all-encompassing airing of black problems transcended the scope of the agency. Even so, NYA underwrote the meetings. Williams and ER were among the first of an impressive number of administration representatives to address them.

The conferences marked the first occasions large numbers of black experts had come to Washington at government expense to offer counsel; whereas, whites had been doing so for years and continued to come for meetings of the Advisory Committee on Education, the National Emergency Council, and the like. The black executives represented a broad spectrum of the black community. They came as bureaucrats, journalists, business mangers, clergymen, educators, and organizational leaders--including some from the National Council of Negro Women. Participating at the 1937 parley were eighty-three conferees and twenty consultants; at the second in '39, two hundred and twenty conferees, thirty-five consultants and approximately fifty visitors.

In part the meetings aimed to fulfill an objective that Bethune had announced at the first cabinet conclave; namely, the collective prioritization of black needs. Also, it was to suggest pragmatic remedies for government action. The '37 conference presented the first opportunity for African Americans to propose "a comprehensive program for the full integration [of African Americans] into the benefits and the responsibilities of American democracy." The '39 assemblage was to evaluate the progress of African Americans since the last conference, to emphasize special difficulties amenable to government redress, and to explore the impact of new legislation. Mary Bethune personally delivered the conference reports to President Roosevelt. NYA distributed copies to the cabinet, the Congress, others in government, and selected private sector groups. When sent to an agency chief whose program was the subject of conference recommendations, the pertinent recommendations were marked.[64]

The conference framed deliberations into four divisions: personal security and equal protection under the law; health and housing; education and recreation; and employment. Regarding the pre-eminent problem of employment in a depression economy, the body chiefly proposed equitable opportunities for apprenticeship training, discarding policies promoting discrimination in Civil Service jobs, standardized wages for domestic workers, extending Social Security benefits to domestic and agricultural workers, and fair employment practice in the government, army, navy, and all federally funded projects, including the Tennessee Valley

Authority. Among other policies, the conference recommended a federal anti-lynching law, enfranchisement, non-discrimination on interstate carriers, a federal offensive against tuberculosis and syphilis, black-staffed health centers in black communities, equal access to hospitals for all veterans, black involvement as tenants and managers in federal housing, equitable inclusion of blacks in suburban communities subsidized by the Resettlement Administration, equitable education dollars, and inclusion of recreational and educational centers in all public housing projects.[65]

During the Roosevelt years, no other civil rights summit generated the excitement of the 1937 meeting. Bethune's statement on "the tremendous historic possibilities of our deliberations" mirrored the thinking of participants. One journalist hailed the leadership forum as "the most successful conference of colored people ever held in the capital." It crafted "a single, clearly-stated program for the Federal government as it touches upon each phase of colored life--a program that is simple yet complete, visionary and yet thoroughly concrete." The NAACP *Crisis* asserted, "The conference went on record as demanding that the government take the lead and set the example by abolishing racial segregation in all its departments, divisions, and branches, and that it refrain from lending its support to the extension of segregation in the United States." Where desegregation was not possible, because of the Supreme Court's 1896 *Plessy* Decision permitting a state to segregate races, the summit wanted real equality of opportunity for African Americans wherever racial segregation legally existed. Moreover, the *Crisis* noted that the tone of the recommendations were unusual for a government-sponsored affair. "There was no mincing of works and no 'pulling of punches' and no smoothing down the condemnation of present practices." From the perspective of about a half century, historian

Joseph Earl Taylor writes that the conference proposals "represented a reasonable program of reform commensurate with the democratic ideals of equality and fairness. The recommendations sought changes in matters where the Federal Government exercised authority and in services which it subsidized." Also, he concluded, the black leaders "consistently requested and expected to have a role in plotting their own destiny," for they did not desire that African Americans become government wards.[66]

The first conference was a coming out party of sorts for the Black Cabinet; and for Bethune, who in the words of labor leader A. Philip Randolph presided with "dignity, grace, ability and vision." It "marked the first time since the President came into the White House that the colored Americans he appointed to big jobs were able to get together and agree on any logical program for his consideration," Associated Negro Press columnist Edward Lawson explained. In the past "bickerings and petty jealousies had split the so-called 'Black Cabinet' into many factions" but now its members were pledged to the reforms encapsulated in conference recommendations. Lawson marveled that through "sheer personality" Bethune had drawn the "whole 'Black Cabinet' together, first for a series of meetings" then for the conference.

Obviously, Mary Bethune had taken Washington by storm. Blacks had been either "unaware of her tremendous energy and grasp of things or they underestimated the potential power of her position." In six months "Mrs. Bethune has gathered everything and everybody under her very ample wing. Today--with the possible exception of Congressman Arthur W. Mitchell--she occupies undoubtedly the most strategic position in the administration simply because she has managed to bring together for unified thought and action all of the colored people high in government authority," Lawson maintained. "Only one who has been in Washington for some time can understand what a big order that was."[67] He could have added that "colored people high in government authority" were men. Later, another journalist assessed Bethune's accomplishment similarly. "When leaders of the male persuasion quibbled as to distinctive titles and full-fledged authority," he reported, "Mrs. Bethune quietly assumed a leadership in the national movements that represented constructive racial endeavor."[68] At any rate, the Black Cabinet and the National Conferences on the Problems of the Negro and Negro Youth insured that Bethune was well-informed on the whole spectrum of black life, especially in relation to possible government enhancement. She could speak authoritatively from within a broad black consensus.

Concentrating on talking with influential government administrators, Bethune sometimes carried proposals straight to the President Roosevelt. ER later stated, "She [Bethune] had a great deal of influence with the President, who had complete trust in whatever she told him as it affected the young people of her race while she was working in the NYA." Bethune, however, requested Roosevelt to consider matters beyond youth also, especially lynching, disfranchisement, and federally funded discrimination. Given his inaction in these areas, she tried small, piece-meal steps to civil rights, primarily in the strategic employment of blacks in the federal establishment. At 11: 45 a.m., Friday, January 12, 1940, for example, with "only God, the President and myself present," she later announced, Bethune discussed several proposals with Franklin D. Roosevelt. According to the *New York Amsterdam News*, she asked the President to consider appointing black federal judges and black men to the military academies at West Point and Annapolis. Although almost 13,000,000 Americans of African ancestry constituted about one-tenth of the country's population, only one black federal judge held court, only three black cadets studied and trained at West Point, while no black midshipmen did so at Annapolis. Also, Bethune recommended reform in Civil Service to ameliorate discrimination. In 1940, only a minuscule fraction of federal employees above the janitorial level were African Americans. Addressing the needs of the ebony masses more specifically, she called for "fuller representation in the Agriculture Department."

This intrepid race leader may have discussed more, for about this time she had prepared a memorandum for the President on "Some of the Things Negroes Desire." It requested not only action in the judiciary, War Department, and Civil Service, but the appointment of blacks elsewhere. These ranged from positions in the recently established Council on Personnel Administration to overhaul the government's personnel system to the more staid programs of the Commerce and Labor Departments. Additionally, Bethune contended for the restoration of jobs to blacks which they had once filled, including Register of the Treasury, Minister to Haiti, auditor of the navy, and collectors of customs in New York, Charleston and other ports.[69] Seemingly, such matters appeared peripheral to FDR in relation to governing the broader society. Nevertheless, as a race liaison during this era Bethune had to make her case. She had to "get in" and "stay in" with white leadership as it existed in order to win concessions for blacks in a system skewed against them. She understood that sometimes concessions impacting minority welfare could be gained. Bethune's specific success in obtaining jobs for African Americans either through Franklin or Eleanor Roosevelt may not be measured, even though she favored Earl Dickerson for the Fair Employment Practices Committee and he was appointed; and a black aide in Selective Service and the War Department, which Campbell Johnson and

William Hastie respectively fulfilled. Certainly her support never hurt a candidate and was factored into decision-making. Nevertheless, it is difficult to determine its impact.[70]

Roosevelt Partisan

As a federal administrator, the price Bethune had to pay for such access to the President and his team was loyalty and touting their works. She gladly complied. She believed that FDR was the best political leader since Abraham Lincoln and the New Deal was moving blacks forward along with the rest of the country. She preached, for example, "I'll Never Turn Back No More!," meaning that she would not forego the tangible benefits of New Deal programs. Politically, she thought that African Americans were "climbing steadfastly up the right side of the mountain."[71] When the U.S. declared war three years later, Bethune was even more emphatic about following Roosevelt's leadership.

> Despite foolish prejudices and discriminations, we as Negroes must move in and offer our services and demand the right to serve shoulder to shoulder with our fellow Americans--just as we have always done.
>
> America need us. . . . To deprive America's production efforts of needed skilled hands because these hands are black is to thrust a knife of disloyalty into the back of Uncle Sam. . . . All of us can serve, and we must. . . . We are as ready and capable as any other American group. . . . THIS IS AMERICA'S WAR. AND WE TOO, ARE AMERICANS.[72]

During both the New Deal and the war, patriot Bethune proved herself decisively partisan. She gave speeches in Roosevelt's presidential campaigns and attended his inaugurations. She began campaigning for him on October 26, 1936, through an address over CBS radio titled "A Tribute to Franklin Delano Roosevelt," sponsored by the Progressive

National Committee and Labor's Non-Partisan League. The next morning, thousands of requests for her speech poured into Washington from every state in the union. In 1940, Bethune's contribution to Roosevelt's re-election centered in part on what she did not do. She did not comply to the administration's request to hold another National Negro Conference under NYA sponsorship. She confided to Aubrey Williams, "We do not have sufficient ground to stand upon to ward off the bombardment from the opposition." In other words, the administration had failed to sufficiently advance a black agenda. In 1944, Bethune chaired the National Non-Partisan Committee for the Re-election of Roosevelt, a black organization. Also, she served as a vice-chair of the National Citizens Political Action Committee, Women's Division for New York, essentially white.[73]

Regardless of Bethune's partisanship, she denied it emphatically. While this may have stemmed from the Hatch Act's prohibition against administrative employees engaging in politics, more likely it derived from Bethune's sensitivity to her race representative functions--functions well-served by neutrality as to party or philosophy, or at least alleging such. After all, Bethune represented a people who, according to Gunnar Myrdal, "seem to be held in a state of eternal preparedness for a great number of contradictory opinions--ready to accept one type or another depending upon how they are driven by the pressures or where they see an opportunity." Anyway, Bethune denied a rumor in 1939 that she would work for the National Democratic Party by explaining, "I am not in politics. I am here as an educator. I am here as an interpreter of my people. I am here making contacts for them. I never made a political speech, I have never been asked to make one." Obviously, Bethune could contradict herself as other political operatives.[74]

Bethune's attachment to the Roosevelts was rooted in intense admiration for them, especially Eleanor. She and the First Lady became close primarily through NYA, the latter's pet agency. The Mary Bethune-Eleanor Roosevelt relationship was a rare, public and private interracial friendship at a time of unyielding racial segregation and discrimination. They both eschewed first name familiarity, however, so as to avoid a misunderstanding of the respect each tendered the other. ER had to work on the relationship, learning to kiss the dark-skinned Bethune good-by, just as she did her friends of lighter hue. Beyond NYA, ER involved Bethune in a cross-section of administration concerns and when a matter crossed ER's desk about which Bethune could be helpful--usually dealing with African Americans--she called on her, just as she did other women allies, or the NAACP's Walter White and the Urban League's T. Arnold Hill. [75]

For her part, having very close white women friends before she came to Washington, Bethune warmed up to ER immediately, relaying pertinent information to her, including numerous invitations to speak from African Americans. At times, she requested the First Lady to contact the President about a given matter. More often, Bethune asked her to intercede with administration officials to facilitate action on specified projects impacting blacks, including hospital and housing developments. Usually, ER obliged. On occasion, this intervention translated into immediate progress, as in the cases of a housing project and a Women's Army Corps Training Center in Daytona Beach, Bethune's home town. But typically, Bethune gained primarily a better understanding of the status of a given situation. Additionally, Bethune deeply enmeshed ER in the affairs of Bethune-Cookman College and the National Council of Negro Women.

The women's friendship was close enough for Bethune to have visited the White House so often, for example, that she didn't even bother putting on a resume participation in the 1939 White House Conference on Children in a Democracy. After all, it constituted only a fraction of her White House schedule. In contrast, she had ballyhooed to high heaven her attendance at Herbert Hoover's Conference on Child Health and Protection in 1930. Bethune felt comfortable enough with ER to ask her to come to Baltimore's Johns Hopkins Hospital in April 1940 to discuss important matters. A pending sinus operation along with unhealthy preexisting conditions for surgery meant Bethune's confinement for two months. "I have a private room and will be allowed visitors at any time," she wrote her friend. "My mind is clear. . ." ER sent flowers weekly. Her hectic schedule could be stretched only so far.[76]

The closeness between Mary Bethune and Eleanor Roosevelt was one thing; it was another between Bethune and the President. Prior to the White House, he had no history of addressing the unfair treatment of minorities. As president, his closest aides--Louis Howe, Marvin McIntyre, and Stephen Early--could care less about the status of blacks and shielded him as much as possible from considering it. Roosevelt even turned over his favorite New Deal initiative, the Civilian Conservation Corps, to the respectable Southern racist, Robert Fechner, who, helped by the army, typically treated blacks either applying for the Corps or in it unseemly. Actions promoting equitable black participation in New Deal benefits stemmed from Roosevelt's wife and a handful of program directors, notably Harold Ickes, W. Frank Persons, Harry Hopkins, Aubrey Williams, Hallie Flanagan, Nathan Strauss, John M. Carmody, Will Alexander, and Rexford G. Tugwell. While Roosevelt issued the celebrated Executive Order 8802, banning employment discrimination in government and defense industries, he did so grudgingly and in the face of irresistible pressure. His dealings with Bethune were a notable exception to his low-profile racial stance. Outside of NYA, these may be interpreted as mostly symbolic, rather than substantive. When at Bethune's request in November 1941, ER asked her husband to appoint an African American to the White House staff for race relations, he replied, "no way."[77]

Yet if one believed Bethune, especially in "My Secret Talks with FDR," it was Franklin Roosevelt who possessed the expansive social commitments animating Eleanor Roosevelt! When discussing the President, Bethune tended to emphasize his great humanitarianism, especially in relation to intangibles. In 1937, she saw in his words "fair play and justice to all." She stated after his death, "Had he lived I am convinced that he would have launched new, bold offensives against bigotry and Jim Crow everywhere." Moreover, Bethune put the best spin possible on her relationship to the President. This could have stemmed from a desire for prestige or simply gratitude for NYA. But most fundamentally, it represented a premier technique for making bricks without straw through words, well placed. She used it regularly with the influential who might assist her. In January 1943, for example, to Paul V. McNutt, chairman of the Fair Employment Practices Committee, she expressed faith in him when she had doubts. Bethune wrote, "I want you to understand that I have the utmost confidence in you and your relationship to my people and the deepest appreciation for what you have done in the past and what you will do in the future." Earlier, she had revealed another attitude to an Alabama black editor: "The President has placed the entire Fair Employment Practice Committee under the directing hand of Mr. McNutt. I think political pressure has brought this about. In my mind, it seems that the whole thing will not be as active, yet we cannot tell how things will work out." [78]

Even though Bethune's less than candid technique lacked effect with McNutt, it achieved results elsewhere. She derived plenty of mileage from projecting closeness to FDR. Clarence Mitchell elucidated, "Often it wasn't so much of what you had in the way of authorization by the President, but to some extent it was what people *thought* you had by way of authorization. And she was very good at that." Cognizant of her friendship with ER, federal officials thought that perhaps she might influence the President's view of them. Consequently, they were inclined to exhibit a cooperative attitude towards black America's most visible representative.[79]

In fact, Mary McLeod Bethune and Franklin D. Roosevelt enjoyed an easy-going relationship. He was comfortable with her. He believed, "that she had great wisdom and an amount of patience and lack of bitterness which was not only extraordinary but very helpful in dealing with the racial situation." On one visit for NYA funding support, she got so carried away that she shook her finger in his face. She felt free enough to "say anything" to him and on one occasion, they did "some almost dirty jokes," recalled West Virginia State College President John W. Davis, on a visit to the White House in the company of Bethune and Walter White. Then, Roosevelt "just started talking and you couldn't stop him." Finally, White intervened. According to Davis, White said something like, "Look here, Franklin Roosevelt, we've been in here so many minutes. . . . and that man is going to open that door in a minute and we are going to be put out of here, and we haven't asked our questions." Apparently turning to Bethune, FDR inquired, "All right, Mary, what do you want in here?" John Davis never gave the answer.[80]

While the purpose of that visit is unknown, it was probably something specific. Labor Department official Lawrence Oxley remembered that was the case when he accompanied Bethune into the Oval Office. They wanted Roosevelt to write a letter to cabinet members, requesting favorable consideration for releasing data to Bethune and her associates on minority participation in their respective programs. Preferring them to exercise independence, Roosevelt said no. Such a letter meant, he suggested, that "I'm telling them what to do." At that point, Bethune took Roosevelt's hand, and talking to him as if "he were a little school boy," explained, "Mr. President, you haven't been listening." Putting his head back, smiling, and looking at her, Roosevelt replied, "Suppose you tell it to me again." She did. Afterwards, Oxley recalled, he summoned his secretary to dictate the statement Bethune had prepared. And, he sent it out.[81]

NYA Division Director

On January 16, 1939, Civil Service made if official: Mary McLeod Bethune was no longer an administrative assistant but the director of the Division of Negro Affairs in the National Youth Administration. She later boasted that her division paralleled the agency's six others relative to salary schedules, grade levels, and the like. Her salary jumped from $5,200 to $6,000. Having started out in NYA in one room, she either occupied, or was on her way into four. This section has four components: the business of the director, the Communist smear against Bethune, the termination of NYA, and Bethune's status afterwards.

The Business of the Director

When her division reached its height, Bethune supervised an assistant director, a public relations adviser, economist, administrative assistant, personal secretary and three stenographers. Throughout her NYA tenure, she enjoyed the invaluable services of aide Arabella Smith Denniston, a Daytona Beach native, who had received all of her education in Bethune's school. Unlike Denniston, Bethune's assistant directors were employed only for a season. In 1938, after Frank Horne exited, academician-administrator O'Hara Lanier came. Successively following him were T. Arnold Hill, a twenty-five year veteran of the National Urban League, and Charles

Browning, a former exemplary administrative assistant to the Illinois NYA state director. All were top-notch.[82]

As Director of the Negro Division, on occasion Bethune stood between white administrators and protesting blacks, with both expecting her support. She had to champion black rights to be a race representative; conversely, she had to mostly uphold the white-dominated bureaucracy to be an effective employee. In a documented case, Bethune veered towards the latter side. In 1940, when George R. Vaughns, a black Californian, complained to Eleanor Roosevelt that his state NYA had practiced discrimination by eliminating its Negro Division and black assistant Vivian Osborne Marsh, he directed her to Bethune who knew "all the facts in the case."

In replying to Roosevelt, Bethune declared that Marsh had performed excellently. Her facts then became as follows: "The policies, activities, and records of the NYA show definitely that discrimination because of race will not be, and has not been, tolerated . . . . There would be evidence of discrimination if the State Administration refused to employ Negroes in any capacity," which was not the case. Additionally, Bethune observed that given the divisiveness among black Californians over the advisability of a Negro Division, the State Director was in a better position than she "to determine whether the Negro youth population is so scattered in the various sections of his state as to justify a Division of Negro Affairs." Records fail to reveal why Bethune stressed the general integrity of NYA when she understood well its shortcomings at state and local levels. Maybe this was only a public stance, while she exerted constructive internal pressure. Maybe she believed that black visibility in California was a losing battle and, consequently, she needed to conserve her moral weight for more promising ones. Whatever the truth, the situation illustrated the dilemma of a black leader in government.[83]

In the same year of the California controversy, 394 black administrative and supervisory officials worked in seventeen southern states and the District of Columbia. They and their colleagues throughout the country were the Negro Division's chief priorities. In 1941, black administrative assistants to state directors served in twenty-seven states, New York City and Washington, D.C. Where assistants worked, typically more black youth enrolled in projects and received upgraded benefits. Until the state structure ended in '42, Bethune continued to support them. In that year, the entire state-based program, run by powerful state directors, was discarded in favor of a regional approach. The regional structure employed nine Negro Affairs Representatives who experienced challenges similar to the former state assistants. Whenever possible, Bethune strengthened their positions.[83]

When the state program ended in '42, all school aid ceased. Over seven years NYA had spent $169,538,854 on it. During the Depression, African Americans valued this NYA component most. While black students received NYA educational funds through regular channels, the Division of Negro Affairs was resourceful enough to administer, as it saw fit, a Special Higher Education Fund for them totaling $609,930 and aiding 4,118. Additionally, when NYA acquired nominal jurisdiction over the Civilian Pilot Training Program, the Negro Division helped to smooth the way for black military pilots by facilitating the training of black college students. It assisted, for example, West Virginia State College, the first of six black institutions to offer flight training, in acquiring its first airplane.[84]

At the time NYA dropped school aid, its vocational component soared. Over its life, the agency poured $467,586,395 into vocational training. In keeping with NYA policies, the

Division of Negro Affairs facilitated the movement of blacks from recreational, agricultural, and personal service projects, in which they had been disproportionately enrolled, into state-of-the-art vocational training in construction, mechanical, and metal working projects. The most notable was the War Production Training Project at Wilberforce, Ohio. In 1942, this project had developed into one using equipment valued at about $250,000 to provide instruction in machine shop, sheet metal, radio, arc welding, and auto mechanics. In 1943, such NYA training was the most visible means by which young black women acquired skills for work in war industries. In fact, during the war years the NAACP Executive Secretary noted, "The N.Y.A. has offered the best opportunity for shop training and work experience according to modern industrial procedures which Negro youth could obtain."

NYA's biggest break-through for African Americans in the war, however, centered on placing NYA trained workers in private employment. Greatly assisted in 1941 by the Executive Order banning discrimination in government and defense industries and with the Negro Division aiding in formulating basic policy for placement, the NYA shepherded thousands of African Americans into jobs previously denied them with major corporations, including Bell Aircraft, Buffalo, New York; Sun Shipbuilding, Chester Pennsylvania; and Radio Corporation of America in Camden, New Jersey. In 1942-43, through its interstate transfer plan, NYA transported more than three thousand trained African Americans to areas of labor shortages and temporarily housed them in regional induction centers until they found other lodging. Between May 1, 1942, and January 30, 1943, 963 males in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, participated in the largest induction project for blacks, which led to jobs in the Norfolk Navy Yard. [85]

Un-American

On October 10, 1942, the Oklahoma City *Black Dispatch* reported that Congressman Martin Dies, a conservative Texas Democrat chairing the House Un-American Activities Committee, created in 1938, had again smeared Mary McLeod Bethune as a communist, along with two other African Americans--William Pickens of the Treasury Department and E. Franklin Frazier of the Library of Congress and Howard University. In response, Bethune had cried fowl. The Federal Bureau of Investigation had already investigated her--interviewing her on April 14, 1942--because of his earlier accusations, and had forwarded its results to her agency. On August 26th of that year, Assistant Administrator Watson B. Miller of the Federal Security Administration, in which NYA was a sub-unit, determined, "We find nothing in this [FBI] report showing the above employee [Bethune] was engaged in any activities which might properly be characterized as subversive or disloyal to our government." The report showed that Bethune had been mentioned in leftist publications, such as the *Daily Worker*, and in other print media trying to change the status quo, by, for example, striving for a permanent Fair Employment Practice Committee, and had been identified at one time with groups having communists members, including the American League for Peace and Democracy, American Youth Congress, National Negro Congress, and the youth organization of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare.

While exonerated by her agency once, Dies kept harassing Bethune. He called on the government in February 1943 to oust her and thirty-seven others, whom he called "crackpot bureaucrats." It made no difference that previously, he had conducted "investigations" showing about 1,176 government workers to be communists, of which the Justice Department had determined that only in two cases was terminating employment justified. [86] Bethune got renowned Washington attorney Charles Houston to help her. He declared, "It is preposterous for anyone to accuse Mrs. Bethune of subversive activities or participation in any program advocating the overthrow of our democratic form of government. I do not believe that Mr. Dies himself thinks that Mrs. Bethune is a Communist. She is a black woman holding an important government position," he maintained, "with influence in high governmental places, and for a black person to have such a position and such influence is to be ipso facto 'red' with Mr. Dies."

More than a hundred of Bethune's friends, about 10 percent white, wrote individual letters defending her. As requested by Bethune's attorney, they repudiated Dies' charges by attesting to Bethune's leadership and asserting that she "has never engaged in any subversive activities or knowingly associated with any other person engaged in subversive activities or endorsing a program of overthrow of our present democratic form of government." They sent these statements to Congressman John H. Kerr, North Carolina Democrat, chair of a Special Sub-Committee which was "to examine the evidence adduced before investigating committees or by agencies of the government" on employees, as to the completeness of the evidence. Charles S. Johnson's letter about Bethune was typical of those Kerr received.

> Mrs. Bethune is neither a "Communist" nor a "Crack-pot" as millions of Americans well know. Her activities began long before there was any cry of "Communist" and have continued unwaveringly and with only one end in view--that of being best able to serve the ill-fated children of the Negro race; and her long and inspiring life of service to Negro youth of America is in itself an eloquent testimony to the falsity of Mr. Dies' accusation. [87]

When Chairman Dies first branded Bethune a communist, she believed that it was outlandish enough to ignore. It was difficult for her and others to defend themselves against an accuser clothed in legislative immunity. Congressman Dies could say whatever he wanted without any accountability. Nevertheless, in time Bethune understood that she had to speak out against his malicious attack.

> If Rep. Dies sees fit to name me a communist, as a result of my outspoken belief in a true democracy under our American form of government, my incessant efforts in seeking for all Americans the constitutionally guaranteed rights of full citizenship regardless of race, creed or color, my endeavors to enlist the full cooperative strength of America in our victory efforts, then the names Mr. Dies chooses to apply are to me but tinkling cymbals and sounding brass.
>
> I shall continue along the straight, true course I have followed through all these years, and I pray some Divine signal may sound in the mind of Mr. Dies that awaken him to a realization that his accusations against loyal Americans will bring them but small discomfort, but can be of great comfort to our enemies.

During the summer of '43, Congress adjourned before settling Bethune's case. Chairman Dies had achieved a victory. A smeared Bethune was leaving government with the liquidation of NYA. The subversive allegations would continue to hover around her and fester because no Congressional Committee determined her innocence or guilt. With the passing years, the FBI would substantially enlarge its Bethune File through secret informants and media clippings. In 1951, as McCarthyism gathered steam, the government would use it to force Bethune's resignation as a consultant to the Farmers Home Administration in the Department of Agriculture, although no one ever charged that when she had joined certain organizations in the 1930's she knew that they were communist "fronts," as the government later deemed.

Additionally, she would be denied the platform of an Englewood, New Jersey public school until the local school board heard the hue and cry of public opinion condemning this denial. Targeting race reformers among others, the House Un-American Committee constituted an Un-American blight in the life of the country in the early 1940's. Bethune paid a heavy price for championing "a true and unfettered democracy."[88]

Farewells

With a program giving skills to disadvantaged youth nation-wide, understandably the NYA creators and staff pushed towards permanency. In the spring of '43 Eleanor Roosevelt mused, "I hope we will never have to give up the NYA. It is doing a very necessary and find work."[89] Administrator Aubrey Williams felt the same way, always favoring vocational training divorced from relief, regardless of the business cycle gyrations. Mary Bethune believed that African Americans, especially, would benefit from a permanent NYA because they experienced far fewer educational and employment opportunities than others, even in economic prosperity.

Permanency, however, proved a chimera. In 1943, the Senate approved a $47,800,000 appropriation to NYA but the House voted nothing. On July 3rd, the Senate-House Conference Committee, by a vote of 39 to 34, denied NYA an appropriation, except for a $3,000,000 liquidation fund. Aubrey Williams immediately sent telegrams to 500 communities, effectively stopping all projects. He dismissed 4,300 staffers. The NYA ceased to turn out trained workers for national defense. A combination of reasons explain the Youth Administration's demise. For years the educational establishment had opposed it because of competition for vocational turf. Congressional Republicans, however, killed it. They were motivated by "race mixing" on many projects, equal benefits to blacks, primarily in the last year, the votes that it might generate for the Democratic nominee in the next presidential election, its relief origins in a booming economy, and its alleged superfluousness.[90]

All who had worked for NYA and fought valiantly for its extension felt a negative undertow when Congress pulled the plug. *The Chicago Defender* reported that Mary McLeod Bethune took it "pretty hard." Bethune made no secret that she writhed in pain. On July 6th, three days after the agency's cancellation, she moaned, "The final stroke came to us last Saturday afternoon at 2:30. I have felt like a mother at the burial of her murdered child from that moment until now. It is hard to give NYA up." The next week, the blue feeling remained. "The liquidation of NYA is a very sad thing to me," she added, "because I know just what it has meant to thousands of white and colored youth throughout the country--opening new technical doors which had never been opened before," she said, "and providing a means of excellent interracial cooperation."[91] On July 6, 1943, Bethune wrote the agency's sole administrator, Aubrey Williams.

> As a member of your staff, I do want to express my personal gratitude for the privilege I have had of working with you during these eight years. You have portrayed in work and action the life and philosophy of Abraham Lincoln. You have dared, at a time when daring is costly in America, to be just to all mankind. You have opened the doors of opportunity for training to an underprivileged group--my people--which have been so tightly bolted for all the years. You have, through the administration of your program, built up an interracial understanding and tolerance among the youth of America that will help in a marvelous way to get the four freedoms we seek.
>
> I bring to you the affection an undying gratitude of our entire staff, both in the national office and on the field, for the way you have stood by, and the doors you have open for us. Your kind are few but we pray God they may be multiplied.

> Your courage and tact and wisdom in fighting the battle for the salvation of the National Youth Administration will always stand out in our memory. You have given so fully of yourself that others may live. At this stage of the battle, we all have a realization that an organization may be destroyed but that an idea for good must and will live on. You can well say, dear Aubrey, as Sir Andrew Barton said:
>
> Though I am hurte I am not slaine.
> I'll lay me down and bleede a while,
> And then I'll rise and fight again.
>
> We know you will, and you will find us by your side. God bless you, our beloved friend. [92]

With the termination of NYA, Mary McLeod Bethune's most far-reaching work had ended. During the desperation and anxiety of depression and war, like "Mother of the Race," she had succored youth with social services, educational grants, vocational training, and government-facilitated jobs.[93] She had pioneered federal affirmative action with her special college fund and had contributed to self-determination with her campaign for black administrative and supervisory personnel. NYA employment had permitted her to become the Roosevelt Administration's primary black spokesperson; conversely, she had been blacks' preeminent representative to the administration. Bethune had cajoled and pushed a sector of blacks and whites connected to NYA, plus thousands of others in the capital and around the country, into a greater commitment to work together for the common good. In so doing, she had helped to advance America towards addressing its most intractable dilemma, oppressive racial inequality. "Any idea for good must and will live on," Bethune had written the NYA Administrator. That which she and so many others had striven for during NYA's lifetime would live on, writ large, in the Civil Rights Revolution and the "Great Society"of the 1960's.

Somewhere in the American psyche, especially in times of racial turmoil, it would remain a memory, capable of prodding the knowledgeable towards a "more perfect union."

Afterglow

When Congress terminated the National Youth Administration, Bethune believed, "I may just be through [in government]. . . .I have been too concerned about the lost opportunities to thousands of youth in America to think of myself," she said.[94] Technically, however, she wasn't through. In addition to adjusting her files and producing a voluminous final report on the Negro office, she acted successfully to insure that the substantial NYA machinery in the South for black vocational training would be transferred to colleges which had used the same to sponsor NYA programs, including her own. The process of winding down NYA lasted officially until January 1944, the Congressional limit for the agency's liquidation. Given the situation, the White House looked around for another position that Bethune could fill. As early as July 21, 1943, Eleanor Roosevelt asked her husband, "Have you found anything for Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune?" Subsequently, the War Department answered that question affirmatively. Bethune declined whatever it had in mind, because her physician had advised against any work entailing travel.[95]

Even so, the Roosevelts maintained their great respect for Mary McLeod Bethune. When Florida's black state college requested a letter for its Bethune testimonial, President Roosevelt complied. He wrote:

> I have known Mrs. Bethune for many years as an able public servant and as a wise citizen devoted to the advance of all Americans. As a woman and as a Negro she has been effectively concerned for a better chance for all Americans and better training

> to meet the widening opportunities. I join you today in honoring her, not merely as leader of women and a leader of her race, but as an American who has helped America advance towards the fulfillment of its rich meaning for all Americans. [96]

The month after this testimonial, Roosevelt died. A shocked Bethune rushed back to the capital from Texas, where she had been visiting, to comfort her friend Eleanor. On the eve of the Commander-in-Chief's funeral, she offered a brief but eloquent eulogy over a national radio tribute. She ended with a benediction: "May God take into His household this servant. May he protect those dearest to him who have been left behind. And may this nation and its people--this world--prosper in the vision that Franklin Delano Roosevelt saw." The following day, Bethune, grieving, attended the funeral in the East Room of White House. Departing, she was "conscious only of a vast sense of loss that pervaded the democratic world." An era had slipped away.[97]

Notes

1. Proceeding of the NYA Regional Conference on the College Work Program for Negroes, September 6, 1940, in *Mary McLeod Bethune: Building a Better World*, ed. Audrey Thomas McCluskey and Elaine M. Smith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 221-226.

2. Scholarly research especially relevant to Bethune and the NYA include Richard A. Reiman, *The New Deal and American Youth: Ideas and Ideals in a Depression Decade* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992); John A. Salmond, *A Southern Rebel: The Life and Times of Aubrey Willis Williams, 1890-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983); Christopher E. Linsin, "Something More Than a Creed: Mary McLeod Bethune's Aim of Integrated Autonomy as Director of Negro Affairs," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 76 (Summer 1997), 20-41; Elaine M. Smith, "Mary McLeod Bethune and the National Youth Administration," in *Clio Was a Woman: Studies in the History of American Women*, ed. Mabel E. Deutrich and Virginia C. Purdy (Washington, D.C: Howard University Press, 1980), 149-177; B. Joyce Ross, "Mary McLeod Bethune and the National Youth Administration: A Case Study of Power Relationships in the Black Cabinet of Franklin D. Roosevelt," *Journal of Negro History*, 60 (January 1975), 1-28; Joyce Ann Hanson, "The Ties that Bind: Mary McLeod Bethune and the Political Mobilization of Women," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1997); Allen Francis Kifer, "The Negro Under the New Deal, 1933-1941," (Ph.D. dissertation,

University of Wisconsin, 1961); George Rawick, "The New Deal and Youth: The Civilian Conservation Corps, the National Youth Administration and the American Youth Congress," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1957).

3. Hanson, "The Ties That Bind,"122-124.

4. *New York Amsterdam News*, July 17, 1943, 11; Quote from McCluskey and Smith, *Bethune: Building a Better World*, 200; *Atlanta Daily World*, July 6, 1943; Eleanor Roosevelt quoted in the *Jackson Advocate* [Mississippi], May 1, 1943, 1; Rawick, "New Deal and Youth," 231.

5. *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 14, 1945, Mary McLeod Bethune Vertical File, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University; Frank S. Horne to Helen White, April 14, 1949, BF, Part 2, Reel 12; Campbell C. Johnson to Bethune, June 9, 1942, Mary McLeod Bethune Foundation Papers, Part 2, Reel 7.

6. William L Houston to Bethune, January 19, 1939, BF, Part 3, Reel 7.

7. The Reminiscences of Clifford and Virginia Durr, 1974, 323, in the Oral History Collection of Columbia University; Salmond, *A Southern Rebel*, 61-62, 285-290.

8. Morris Schnapper to Aubrey Williams, including a note on each advisory member, August 7, 1935, File of Thelma McKelvey, National Advisory Committee, NYA, Record Group 119, National Archives, Washington, D.C; Smith, "Bethune and NYA," 151.

9. Smith, "Bethune and NYA," 151-152.

10. "Women's Council Spends Busy Day," *New York Times*, December 8, 1927, 26; ER to Catherine Owens Peare, August 9, 1950, Bethune File, Bethune to ER, December 18, 1933, and other letters, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

11. Smith, "Bethune and NYA," 152, 154; Bethune quoted from Elaine M. Smith, "Introduction: From '1939 Honor List' to 'An Inspiration for All Time,'" *Guide to the Microfilm Edition, Mary McLeod Bethune Papers: The Bethune Foundation Collection, Part 3* (Bethesda, Md: University Publications of America, 2002), v.

12. Smith, "Bethune and NYA," 153.

13. *Washington Tribune*, May 5, 1936, Mary McLeod Bethune Vertical File, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York City

14. Bethune quoted from Proceedings of the First National Youth Administration

National Advisory Committee Meeting, August 15, 1935, 29, Charles Taussig Papers, FDRL.

15. Christopher E. Linsin, "Something More Than a Creed," 38-39; for example of Johnson's style of speaking, see Proceedings of the NYA National Advisory Committee, September 6-7, 1939, 38-45, Files of the National Advisory Committee, Series 1, 1937-1939, NYA, RG 119, NA.

16. Bethune quoted from Proceedings of the National Youth Administration's National Advisory Committee Second Meeting, April 28-29, 1936, in *Bethune: Building a Better World*, McCluskey and Smith, 216-218.

17. Bethune, "My Secret Talks with FDR," in *The Negro in Depression and War*, ed. Bernard Sternsher (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), 57-58, reprinted by permission from *Ebony*, IV (April 1949), 42-51. Some misrepresentations in "Secret Talks" are as follows: Bethune knew FDR as the New York Governor; her NYA office functioned for ten years; Bethune became acquainted with Eleanor Roosevelt through her husband; FDR never refused to see her; in 1924, Bethune lunched for the first time with ER; in 1934, she attended her first NYA Advisory Meeting; in 1941, ER spoke to over 20,000 at Bethune-Cookman College; and in 1943, certain Southern states alone failed to allocate funds for NYA Negro Affairs.

18. Edith D. Glee, "Call to Serve," manuscript, November 22, [1936?], BF; "Mrs. Bethune Lays Down Challenge to H.U. Students," *Washington Tribune*, December 8, 1936, Schomburg.

19. Blanche Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt, 1933-1938*, Vol II (Viking Penguin: 1999), 158-159; Kifer, "The Negro under the New Deal," 89.

20. For an indication of the need for B-CC to obtain new funding sources see, Bethune to Jackson Davis, in *Bethune: Building a Better World*, McCluskey and Smith, 115-116; Susan Ware, *Partner and I: Molly Dewson, Feminism, and New Deal Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 224; Smith, "Bethune and NYA," 154.

21. Herbert Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue*, Volume 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 44-48, 58-59.

22. David Jones to Aubrey Williams, July 18, 1936, National Council of Negro Women Papers, Series 4, Box 1, Folder 10, Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site National Park Service, Washington, D.C.

23. Smith, "Bethune and NYA," 154.

24. Horne to Henry A. Hunt, July 31, 1936, NCNW Papers, Series 4, Box 1, Folder 8.

25. Aubrey Williams quoted from Earl Devine Martin, "Mary McLeod Bethune: A Prototype of the Rising Consciousness of the American Negro" (M.A. thesis, Northwestern University, 1956), 91; Lash quoted from Robert Weaver's statement in "'Her Boys' Remember;"

26. Salmond, *Southern Rebel*, 139; Williams to W.S. Sneed, June 28, 1939, Aubrey Williams Papers, FDRL.

27. Smith, "Bethune and NYA," 81-82.

28. Ibid., 166-167; Bethune, "From Day to Day" [column], *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 2, 1938, 14.

29. Smith, "Bethune and NYA," 164-165; Arthur W. Mitchell, "Speech of Hon. Arthur W. Mitchell," October 14, 1942, 12, Ferdinand Douglass Bluford Papers, North Carolina A & T University Archives.

30. Bethune quoted from Proceedings of the NYA Regional Conference on the College Work Program for Negroes, 223; *Final Report of the National Youth Administration* (Washington, D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), 51-52.

31. Report of Conference of Negro State Administrative Assistants and Members of State Advisory Committees, February 11-13, 1937, Correspondence, Reports, Information File 1938-41, Office of Negro Affairs, NYA; Smith, "Bethune and NYA," 165-166.

32. Smith, "Bethune and NYA," 153; Bethune quoted from Telephone Conversation with Robert S. Richey, September 29, 1938, in *Bethune: Building a Better World*, McCluskey and Smith, 219.

33. *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 22, 1935, 1.

34. Telephone Conversation with Richey, September 29, 1938.

35. Report of the Conference of Negro State Administrative Assistants and Members of State Advisory Committees, Annual Report, June 30, 1937, Inactive Correspondence, Office of Negro Affairs, NYA.

36. Bethune to Brown, September 11, 1936, Inactive Correspondence, Office of Negro Affairs, NYA.

37. "55,000 Aided By The NYA Program, Says Dr. Bethune," *Washington Tribune*, April 23, 1938, BF; R.W. Tallman to Williams, April 16, 1938, R.W. Tallman to Richard R. Brown, April 18, 1938, NCNW Papers, Series 4, Box 1, Folder 9; Hornton quoted from McCluskey and Smith, *Bethune: Building a Better World*, 200.

38. Bethune, "From Day to Day," *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 8, 1937, 8; Wil Law Gray to Mabel Carney, June 16, 1937, Ernest F. Witte to Richard Brown, April 16, 1938, Mabel Carney to Aubrey Williams, June 23, 1938, NCNW Papers, Series 4, Box 1, Folder 9.

39. Bethune quoted from Proceedings of the NYA Regional Conference, St. Paul, Minnesota, October 31-November 2, 1938, 56-59, Charles Taussig Papers, FDRL.

40. Appearing from January 23, 1937 to June 18, 1938, Bethune's column, which her NYA staff helped to write, was originally titled "Weekly Chats" but changed to "From Day to Day" on March 20, 1937. During some weeks, however, it was omitted from the paper.

41. Clarence Mitchell quoted from Nancy J. Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 142; E. Franklin Frazier quoted from Martin, "Rising Social Consciousness," 84; Sheila Flemming, *The Answered Prayer to a Dream: Bethune-Cookman College, 1904-1994* (Daytona Beach: Donning Publishers, 1995), 77-79.

42. Quote from Edwin R. Embree, "With Prayer and Sweat," *Negro Digest* (December 1943), 43; photograph of Bethune on picket line in McCluskey and Smith, *Bethune: Building a Better World*, 254.

43. Myrdal, *American Dilemma*, 611-612; Gerda Lerner, *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 163-164.

44. Catherine Owen Peare, *Mary McLeod Bethune* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1951), 176; Interview, James C. Evans, Washington, November 10, 1972; "Mrs. Roosevelt," *Washington Daily News*, May 21, 1955, Mary McLeod Bethune Vertical File, Atlanta University Center, Woodruff Library; Stikoff, *New Deal*, 80-81.

45. NCNW Proceedings of Annual Meeting, November 26, 1938, 25-26; Virginia Durr, *Outside the Magic Circle* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985), 120-121.

46. Smith, "Introduction: From '1939 Honor List,'" vi; Bethune quoted from "America's Town Meeting" Broadcast, November 27, 1939, BF, Part 3, Reel 3.

47. Smith, "Introduction: From '1939 Honor List,'" vi.

48. Ibid., vii; Bethune to Charles Houston, April 10, 1939, Mary McLeod Bethune Vertical File, Mary McLeod Bethune Council House, Washington, D.C.

49. Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt*, 412.

50. Farm Tenancy Committee Papers, Bureau of Agriculture Economics, Record Group 83, National Archives; Will Alexander to Marvin McIntyre, December 9, 1936, Will Alexander to Marvin McIntyre, December 2, 1936, Mack Robb to J.B. Gurthie c/o Senator Claude Pepper, November 24, 1936, FDR Papers, FDRL.

51. Proceedings, Farm Tenancy Committee, February 11, 1937, 3-4, December 17, 1936, 50-52, Bethune to L.C. Gray, January 23, 1937, Farm Tenancy Committee Papers. Bethune's letter may be found also in McCluskey and Smith, *Bethune: Building a Better World*, 230-232.

52. Stikoff, *New Deal*, 48; Wilma Dykeman and James Stokely, *Seeds of Southern Change: The Life of Will Alexander* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1962), 224-225; Report of the Second National Conference on the Problems of the Negro and Negro Youth, January 12-14, 1939, 22-23, BF.

53. Thomas A. Krueger, *And Promises to Keep* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967), 20-39; Sterling Brown quoted from Morton Sosna, *In Search of the Silent South: Southern Liberals and the Race Issue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 88-98; Durr, *Outside the Magic Circle*, 120-121; *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 3, 1938.

54. Eugenia Hope quoted from NCNW Proceedings of Annual Meeting, November 26, 1938, 26-28.

55. Linda Reed, *Simple Decency and Common Sense: The Southern Conference Movement, 1938-1963* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 185-189.

56. The assessment is based upon the writer's review of the Frank Porter Graham Papers. Porter was the first elected chair of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, who, unlike most, remained with the organization until its demise.

57. Reed, *Simple Decency and Common Sense*, 100-101.

58. Weiss, *Farewell to the Party*, 70-72;

59. Johnson quoted from Martin, "Bethune and the Rising Consciousness" 80; Frank Horne, "Her Boys,' Remember;" Weiss, *Farewell to the Party*, 70-72.

60. Weiss, *Farewell to the Party*, 136-156; *Washington Afro-American*, May 28, 1955, 4; Jane R. Motz, "The Black Cabinet: Negroes in the Administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt," (M.A. Thesis, University of Delaware, 1964), 21-83; Roi Ottley, *'New World A-Coming:' Inside Black America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943), 254-257; Dutton Ferguson to Bethune, September 23, 1939, Bethune to C.M. Edmunds, September 29, 1939, BF.

61. Minutes of the Federal Council on Negro Affairs, August 7, 1936, in *Bethune:*

Building a Better World, ed. McCluskey and Smith, 226-229.

62. Ibid.; Bethune to Eleanor Roosevelt, February 10, 1938, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; Robert Weaver, "'Her Boys,' Remember."

63. Ottley, *New World A-Coming*, 266-267; William J. Trent and Frank Horne, "'Her Boys' Remember;" Al Sweeney, *Washington Afro-American*, May 28, 1955, 4.

64. Smith, "Bethune and NYA," 160; Al Sweeny, *Washington Afro-American*, May 28, 1955, 4; McCluskey and Smith, *Bethune: Building a Better World*, 232-233; Joseph Earl Taylor, "Two National Conferences on the Problems of the Negro and Negro Youth 1937 and 1939: A Comprehensive Program for the Full Integration into the Benefits and Responsibilities of the American Democracy," (Ph.D. dissertation, Catholic University, 1985), 1-2, source of Bethune quote; Elaine M. Smith, "Introduction: Mary McLeod Bethune and 'So Many Varied Correspondents," *Guide to the Mary McLeod Bethune Papers: The Bethune Foundation Collection, Part 2* (Bethesda: University Publications of America, 1999), vii-viii.

65. Elaine M. Smith, "Mary McLeod Bethune," in *Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. Darlene Clark Hine et. al., 123.

66. B. Edward Lawson, "Straight From the Capital" [column], *Charleston Messenger*, January 23, 1937, BF; *Crisis*, February 1937, 46, 62; Taylor, "Two National Conferences," 1-2.

67. Randolph to Bethune, December 2, 1938, Bethune Vertical File, Bethune Council House; Lawson, "Straight from the Capital;" William Trent, "'Her Boys' Remember."

68. Quoted from a caption under Bethune's picture labeled "Assumed Race Leadership," Unidentified Newspaper, December 20, 1937, Second Scrapbook, BF, Part 1, Reel 7; Eleanor Roosevelt to Catherine Peare, August 9, 1950, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, FDRL.

69. *New York Amsterdam News*, June 12, 1940, Bethune File, Atlanta University Center; Bethune to Franklin Roosevelt [1939], BF; Another version of "Some of the Things Negroes Desire," appears in a draft letter to FDR in McCluskey and Smith, *Bethune: Building a Better World*, 236-240.

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71. Mary McLeod Bethune, I'll Never Turn Back No More!" *Opportunity*, 16 (November, 1938), 234-326.

72. Bethune, "We Too, Are Americans," *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 17, 1941, 8.

73. *Washington Afro-American*, January 27, 1944; Edith D. Glee, "Call to Serve;" Activities of the Division of Negro Affairs, September 15-November 30, 1936, Division of Negro Affairs, NYA; Marvin McIntyre to Aubrey Williams, December 24, 1936, FDR Papers, FDRL; Bethune to Aubrey Williams (Memorandum), October 17, 1939, in *Bethune: Building a Better World*, ed. McCluskey and Smith, 235-236; Smith, "Introduction: Bethune and Varied Correspondents," xiii; Mrs. Edward M.M. Warburg to Bethune, November 11, 1944, BF, Part 2, Reel 12.

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75. Joseph P. Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971), 523; Interview with Lawrence Oxley by the Writer, November 11, 1972, Washington, D.C; Eleanor Roosevelt, "Some of My Best Friends are Negroes," *Ebony* (February 1953), 18.

76. Smith, "Bethune and the NYA," 157; Elizabeth Lindsey Davis, *Lifting as They Climb* (Chicago: National Association of Colored Women, 1937), 179; Bethune to ER, April 16, 1940, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, FDRL.

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80. Eleanor Roosevelt to Catherine Peare, August 9, 1950; The Reminiscences of John Davis, 379-380.

81. Lawrence Oxley Interview.

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87. Charles Houston to Charles S. Johnson, March 20, 1943, Charles S. Johnson to John H. Kerr, March 26, 1943, John H. Kerr to Charles S. Johnson, April 13, 1943, Mary McLeod Bethune Papers, Fisk University. Bethune Papers, BF, Part 2, Reel 4.

88. *Washington Afro-American*, July 10, 1943, 7; Statement of Mrs. Bethune to the Dies Committee, BF, Part 2, Reel 4; Patsy Graves to Claude Barnett, July 13, 1951, Claude Barnett

Papers, Chicago Historical Society; Smith, "Bethune's Last Will and Testament" 107-108.

89. Roosevelt quoted in the *Jackson Advocate*, [Mississippi], May 1, 1943, 1.

90. *New York Times*, July 4, 1943, 1, 2E; *New York Amsterdam News*, July 10, 1943, 5. *Atlanta Daily World* July 6, 1943, 4.; *Jackson Advocate*, July 17, 1943, 1;

91. *Chicago Defender*, July 17, 1943, 19; Bethune to Eleanor Roosevelt, July 6, 1943, BF; *Washington, Afro-American*, July 10, 1943, 8.

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93. Elaine M. Smith, "Introduction to 'Closed Doors'" [by Mary McLeod Bethune], in *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement*, ed. Bettye Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 11.

94. *Washington Afro-American*, July 10, 1943, 8;

95. Eleanor Roosevelt to FDR, July 21, 1943, Jonathan Daniels to Grace Tully, January 23, 1945, President's Official File, 5393, FDR Papers, FDRL.

96. Franklin D. Roosevelt to Mrs. O.B. Moore, February 28, 1945, FDR Papers, FDRL.

97. Bethune, "Tribute to Franklin D. Roosevelt" in *Bethune: Building a Better World*, McCluskey and Smith, 248-249; Bethune, "My Secret Talks," 65.

Chapter 3

Hallmarks of Growth and Relevancy

Introduction

In November 1938, a young newcomer to the National Council of Negro Women, Chicago's Marjorie Steward Joyner, a cosmologist extraordinaire, perceived the three year-old organization's palpable potential for growth and relevancy. Engaging the Founder-President Mary McLeod Bethune, she remarked, "We are going places." "You know, I think that too," the elder rejoined.[1] They were right. The NCNW's augmented stature a few years later could be discerned in multiple ways, including memberships. Whereas, in November 1938 it counted only four dues-paying national affiliates and probably one local council, five years later the number of national affiliates had expanded to twenty-one and local councils to nine.[2]

This chapter examines the places the NCNW went, or strides it made in keeping with stated objectives, roughly between 1938 and 1943. It extends from the period following the NCNW precedent-setting White House Conference to the eve of acquiring a headquarters building and the sense of permanency that it symbolized. For these momentous years, which witnessed the swallowing up of the Great Depression in war-time production, several topics are considered. "A Case for Growth and Relevancy" presents starkly contrasting reports of NCNW executive secretaries at the beginning and end of the time considered. "The Annual Meeting" explains the nature of the council's indispensable yearly conclave relative to context, tone, programs, typical considerations, highlights, and Mary Bethune's presidential aura. "Reaching Out" discusses the council's external contacts, particularly the relationship with a pivotal government program for women and a mainstream voluntary women's organization. "Internal Matters" reviews NCNW's memberships, leadership core, and finances, areas of concern to all viable organizations. "Wartime Emphases" embraces ideas and activities pertaining to the country's World War II mobilization, specifically the employment of women, response to riots, and affirmations of patriotism. Moreover, "Wartime Pride: The Women's Army Corps" deals with progress towards equal opportunity in the female component of one military service.

A Case for Growth and Relevancy

The annual reports from NCNW executive secretaries in 1938 and 1943 reflect the course of the organization in conjunction with the times. They dramatize the growth of the National Council and indicate a consistency of interests over changing times. In the former year, aside from the 1938 NCNW White House Conference, previously discussed, Secretary Clara Burrill Bruce, working gratuitously and part-time in New York City without paid assistance, presented an excellent demonstration of NCNW adroitly addressing a few city and state matters needing its bracing or agitation late in the Great Depression. By contrast, in 1943 during a booming war economy NCNW's first full-time, salaried executive, Jeanetta Welch Brown working in Washington, D.C., focused expansively on the national scene. She enjoyed the services of a full-time stenographer, an assistant, and many volunteers.

Secretary Bruce indicated that aside from answering inquiries and acknowledging various milestones--members' elevation to a new status, et cetera--she dealt primarily with New York. She and several other New Yorkers represented the NCNW there at a prestigious women's luncheon and a meeting of the United States National Council of Women. While Bruce sent one message to a peace organization, she sent several letters or telegrams to New York officials, from the governor and administrator of the State Department of Education to the New York City mayor and other officials, with mixed responses. Each communication pertained to one of the following: licencing of nurses, a bill of rights in the new state constitution, revived screening of the notorious *Birth of a Nation* film in New York City, Benjamin O. Davis' elevation to colonel in the New York 369th National Guard, and the need to appoint a qualified African American to vacancies on the Board of Education and the New York City Housing Board.[3]

By contrast, Brown delved into NCNW's clearinghouse function and public relations. She and her staff sent out more than 15,000 pieces of printed and mimeographed materials, including press-releases, newsletters, booklets, pamphlets, manuals, minutes, and the like. Also, she assisted in bringing out the council's periodical, first published in 1940. With a congenial personality, Jeanetta Brown received a stream of visitors at the council's makeshift headquarters, located in President Bethune's apartment at 1812 9th Street in northwest Washington. On the international front, she maintained communication with the Joint Canadian Women's Council. Moreover, she and several members, including Bethune, helped to plan the entertainment and reception for Liberian President Edwin Barclay during his 1943 state visit. At Blair House, Washington's traditional abode for visiting heads of state, they presented a letter from African American women for Liberian women to Barclay and Liberian President-Elect William V. Tubman.

Brown concentrated on domestic matters. Like Bruce, she prepared letters and telegrams to officials, but at the federal level. Probably President Bethune collaborated with her on communications, over Bethune's signature, to President Franklin Roosevelt and other appropriate officials relative to the '43 riots; future housing programs; and the appointment of a woman to the

Fair Employment Practices Committee. While the NCNW enjoyed easy contact with representatives of black organizations, including the voluntary civilian Women's Army for National Defense (WAND), Brown also promoted NCNW's association with essentially white groups; namely, the National Committee to Abolish the Poll Tax; Women's Advisory Committee to the War Manpower Commission; National Council of Women; National Council of Jewish Women; American Jewish Conference; National Council of Catholic Women; and the Advisory Committee of the Labor Department's Women's Bureau, on which the NCNW held membership. Additionally, she oversaw most of NCNW's participation in public policy meetings, including a conference hosted by the Congressional Committee for the Protection of Consumers, a gathering of the Food for Freedom Committee, a Conference Against Race Discrimination in the War Effort, a conclave of the Committee on the Participation of Women in Post-War Planning, a panel on Community Relations at a federally-sponsored housing conference, and a showdown on Negro participation in the navy's WAVES--Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service.

The country's war footing and organizational growth carried Jeanetta Brown into additional functions. While two new metropolitan councils originated in '43, Brown addressed meetings of two older ones in Chicago and New York. She spoke also at the annual meeting of the Housewives League and an installation ceremony of the Pullman Car Cleaners of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. NCNW's advisory status to the War Department's Women Interest Section led Brown to tour one facility where the Women's Army Corps trained troops and another one where troops worked. On tour she experienced "the same treatment and courtesies as other delegates" in the advisory body. Moreover, she participated in formulating solicited recommendations to facilitate recruiting black women into the WAC. But most challenging for elected a slate of officers--every other year; defined and asserted its position on noteworthy issues; and educated members on critical civic matters, thus sharpening their political acumen. In fact, the NCNW annual conclave served as the chief means for members to create out-of-town relationships, develop new concepts of female leadership, and promote political activism. This survey of the yearly assembly presents it with perspective, offers an essential summary, recounts specific matters voiced, reviews the annual dinner, describes the White House Conference-Tea, and relates Mary McLeod Bethune's presidential bearing.

Context

The NCNW annual conferences from 1938 to 1943 unfolded against the global background of Adolph Hitler's cataclysmic struggle to build a German Reich of a thousand years. When the United Stated skirted around the edges of the struggle and later, when it opposed Hitler mightily, American women, in addition to men, were affected profoundly. Women flocked into the war industries. "All of them meet with opposition and resentment," the *Chicago Defender* noted in the autumn of '42, "but Negro women find the utmost difficulties. Many employers do not want them because they do not want Negro-white unity. Many workers are incited against them by employers who play upon the prejudices upon which these white workers have for so long been fed." The newspaper then sounded marching orders to the NCNW. "All this must be relentlessly fought. The Council meets during a war in which Negroes can win their citizenship rights as human beings. These rights must be fought for as a necessary war measure," it continued. "America must use all of its labor power, Negro women included."[7]

The NCNW needed no reminder of goals to pursue. The council's "Findings" in 1940 indicated that the body recognized its salient issues by concluding, "We . . . condemn every

Executive Secretary Brown was launching new council endeavors: the monthly newsletter TELEFACT, "We Serve America Week," and Wartime Employment Clinics. The National Council of Negro Women had indeed traveled far, just as Marjorie Joyner and Bethune had predicted.[4]

The Annual Meeting

Typically energizing participants with knowledge, optimism, and a desire to serve, the yearly assembly constituted a major element in the work of NCNW. Usually reporters viewed each as "one of the most important gatherings" of the year and an "excellent Congress of Women." In 1941, one journalist exclaimed, "We were inspired by it all. So many stimulating speeches, so many valued suggestions, so many vitally important plans for the Council objectives." President Mary Bethune was even more emphatic about this meeting, deeming it "the most important gathering of Negro Women in America."[5]

Usually at the yearly conclave camaraderie ruled. Convention-goers met like-minded people from everywhere, some for the first time. In the absence of adequate hotel accommodations due to racial segregation, many out of town conventioneers stayed with local friends. Sometimes others dropped by, which usually made for memorable times. Occasionally during the annual conference, local members of a national organization held a reception for their visiting president, as did Washington members of the Women's Auxiliary to the National Medical Association in 1941.[6]

The indispensable meeting, however, served greater objectives than mere socializing. As in most such organizations, it reviewed the past year's work; planned for the future; permitted members to vent on pertinent topics; attracted media acknowledgment; enrolled new members;

manifestation of separation of the races, segregation and differentials in treatment whether it emanates from the federal, state, or local governments or any other source; and while we will defend if need be to the last extremity the right to live under this form of government," the declaration maintained, "equally so we shall defend our right to be free men and free women and to continue to contribute to America and the world the rich heritage of the years."[8] Nonetheless, the *Defender*'s editorial further highlighted the importance of black female leaders seeking an extension of democracy to black citizens at home. The times were propitious because the nation could not as easily ignore women of color who insisted on being heard, when it was battling undemocratic forces abroad in the name of democracy.

Overview[9]

The annual meeting traveled. New York hosted it in 1938 and '39. Washington, D.C., held forth the following two years. Chicago beckoned in '42; New York, the next. Attendance increased in Washington and in '43, in New York. When the government curtailed large, voluntary confabs due to the exigencies of war and requested national organizations to help alleviate congestion in the capital city by holding smaller meetings in other locales, the annual meeting downsized into an executive workshop, registering forty-odd participants. A year earlier, the inclusive gathering had counted 700, and "was attended by the largest number of outstanding Negro women ever assembled."[10] The workshop was limited to national officers, chairs of national departments and committees, life members, representatives of national and local affiliates, and a few guests. Both the regular meeting and its smaller version attracted women from all sections of the country.

The feel of the annual conference noticeably shifted. In the first two years, when it met in

New York at the Harlem YWCA, 179 West 137 Street, it appeared more fluid than later. In '38, the business sessions exhibited an improvisation. The agenda appeared somewhat loose, as if the organization were still finding its way. At that assembly Bethune remarked, "We have been stumbling and falling down, and getting up. . . . I think now we have just about gotten to the point where our feet are on the ground."[11] In '39, planned presentations considered "Social and Labor Legislation," "Youth and the Present Day Problems," and "Race Relations."

In 1940, convening for two days in Washington during October, rather than one day in New York during November, the council further structured its proceedings. While holding a session at the White House and Howard University's Rankin Chapel, the principal venue was the Department of Labor, 14th and Constitution Avenue Northwest. Using the theme "Women Facing New Frontiers," two panels, consisting of five discussants each, focused on "Consumer Problems in 1940" and "Citizenship Responsibilities in 1940." Other speakers gave discourses: Congressman Arthur Mitchell, Judge Armond Scott, Community Activist Eugenia Hope, Administrator of Consumer Affairs Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Editor Sue Bailey Thurman, and New York City Tax Commissioner Hubert T. Delany.

The succeeding year, with the conclave themed "Women in the National Emergency: Toward Unity of Purpose-Unity of Action!," a larger number of individuals presented information. In a two-part symposium on the sub topic "The Role of the National Council of Negro Women in the World Today," ten stellar NCNW members shared their wisdom: Sadie Mossell Alexander, Ora Brown Stokes, Florence K. Norman, Ruth Whitehead Whaley, Mamie Davis, Vivian Carter Mason, Carita V. Roane, Dorothy I. Height, Sue Bailey Thurman and Elsie Austin. Moreover, the conference featured twenty discussants in a "National Defense Roundtable." Most belonged to the

Federal Council on Negro Affairs, better known as the Black Cabinet, including Robert Weaver, William Hastie, Constance Daniels, Venita Lewis, Frank S. Horne, Campbell C. Johnson, Alfred E. Smith, Edgar G. Brown, T. Arnold Hill, and William L. Houston. Several notable personalities outside government addressed the assembly: NCNW's own Eunice Hunton Carter, the National Urban League's Lester Granger, and Howard University's Rayford Logan. Additionally, the ranking figures from the Roosevelt Administration giving discourses were A.A. Berle, Jr., Assistant Secretary of State; Paul V. McNutt, Administrator, War Manpower Commission; Aubrey Williams, Administrator, National Youth Administration; and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. As President Bethune had averred, Washington afforded "wider contacts," "very fine connections," "a new touch, [and] a new group."[12]

After the heady D.C. gatherings, the first post-Pearl Harbor annual meeting, an executive workshop in Chicago on October 15-17, 1942, appeared retrogressive relative to scale and numbers. But columnist Bess Holloway observed that at all the NCNW "'big shots' were present there and seemed eager to carry on."[13] In addition to a mass meeting at DuSable High School, five sub-workshops convened at the Southside Art Center Ballroom. Three dealt with the council organization. Another focused on "Participation of the Negro Woman in the War Effort;" the last, "The Role of the Negro Woman In Peace Time Planning." Employment clinics throughout the country was the new development emanating from the meeting.

The next year, Bethune pronounced the New York workshop, headquartered at the "Y," "the most successful Council meeting in the history of our organization." It maintained an established emphasis on jobs and full citizenship. Additionally, in riot-torn New York, where African Americans had warred against Harlem's white commercial property, the NCNW accented "interracial goodwill," through an all-day Saturday Interracial Forum held at 122 East 22nd Street. The workshop featured six excellent panels through which a highly respected slew of experts discussed housing, consumer education, employment, child welfare, the armed forces, and intercultural relationships. With her federal job and agency abolished, and with the presidency of Bethune-Cookman College relinquished, the "need and value of building interracial goodwill and Christian understanding" was the priority Bethune had chosen for herself and the NCNW.[14] Breaking new ground by meeting on Sunday, this New York workshop conducted on October 17, 1943, a "Monster Mass Meeting" in the Golden Gate Ballroom, at 143rd Street and Lenox Avenue. It called for "the integration of colored women in the war effort." Apparently a feast of inspiration and information came from Bethune; New York City Councilman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.; *South Today* Editor Lillian Smith, who was advertised as "A courageous white woman of Georgia;" Beulah Whitby of the Detroit Riot Interracial Commission; and Johnny Carey, National Executive Secretary of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).[15]

Concerns Expressly Voiced

At all annual meetings during 1938-1943, council members exhibited an ingrained desire to enhance how others perceived African Americans, especially the women. Therefore, they proposed monitoring the media's characterization of blacks, tracking school materials referring to and reflecting on blacks, publicizing the achievements of race sisters, participating in the 1940 New York's World Fair, and the like. Believing that African American women deserved special recognition, they suggested that a pageant be written and performed depicting the progress of their group; and, they established an archives collection on their history. Council members were indisputably "race women," as sometimes tagged in the Afro press.

As the preceding suggests, intertwined with the inherent impulse to elevate perceptions of the race, NCNW members wished to further understand, commemorate, and celebrate the African American heritage. This extended beyond women. They proposed a Yearbook on the Emancipation Proclamation; also, cooperation with National Negro Memorial Diamond Jubilee Celebration, on October 20, 1940, in marking an anniversary of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which abolished slavery. For his great work in fostering the scholarly study of African Americans, NCNW members directed that a letter of commendations be sent to Dr. Carter G. Woodson, founding editor of the *Journal of Negro History*, now *Journal of African American History*. Moreover, they wanted a New York City public school named in honor of Renaissance Man James Weldon Johnson; and "they called for the reinstatement of Dr. Max Yergan, as instructor of Negro history at City College, New York." Council women supported action culminating in the U.S. Post Office issuing a stamp honoring Booker T. Washington. They commended President Franklin Roosevelt for appointing Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., a brigadier general, the highest ranking black officer in the armed services up to that time. They endorsed emphatically the movement for a George Washington Carver Monument. And, almost automatically, they sent a telegram of condolence to the widow of Robert Lee Vann, the deceased publisher of the *Pittsburgh Courier*.

Some matters NCNW members discussed year in and year out. Employment issues predominated. Deliberations tended to center on getting professional blacks into all branches of the military and all major government agencies, especially those dealing with social welfare and defense. The often heard social welfare topics dealt chiefly with health and education, with the latter including an emphasis on consumer education, training schools for domestic workers, and especially federal action to equalize state education funds between black and white schools. The denial of the right to vote and lynching, which in effect were government-sanctioned outrages against African Americans, cut council members deepest. Therefore, the NCNW helped to wage a campaign against the poll tax and assisted the NAACP in creating sentiment for the passage of anti-lynching legislation in Congress.

Also at the annual meeting, council members debated international questions. Cognizant of the interdependence of the world's people and wishing to interpret African American women internationally, the NCNW favored bypassing the National Council of Women of the United States to create a direct tie with the International Council of Women, a loose federation established in 1888 consisting mostly of national councils in Eurocentric-led nations. Additionally, as part of the New Negro heritage, which in the jazzy, liberating 1920s had laid claim to the monumental task of re-establishing links with "the scattered peoples of African derivation," the council especially wanted contact with the world's non-white women, probably because common cultural experiences made for a heighten interest and the likelihood of easy rapport. Wherever their technology and networks insured supremacy, whites, as a group, made clear that non-whites as a group, were beneath them.[16] Consequently, the NCNW appreciated the idea behind the International Council of Women of the Darker Races, organized in 1922 in Washington, D.C., and existing until 1940, when its third president and NCNW treasurer Addie Dickerson died. In that same year, the National Council co-opted a major objective of the Darker Races organization by conducting a Cuban Seminar in Cuba, as a step in working with women of "closely allied ethnic groups in Cuba, Haiti, and India."[17]

The biggest international issue for the NCNW, however, was World War II, and events preceding it. While in 1939 the council urged affiliates to lobby Congress for repeal of the Neutrality Act, it was more concerned with the plight of European Jews. At the '38 meeting, veteran clubwoman of an interracial and international ilk, Mary McCrorey of Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina, introduced the subject in the wake of the Nuremberg Laws, which stripped German Jews of their most elementary civil rights. At the time, Charlotte Hawkins Brown contended that "Hitler is endeavoring to reduce the status of Jews in Germany to that of the Negro in New York."[18] The council, however, passed a resolution on the subject phrased diplomatically.

> We, the National Council of Women, Inc., in assembly in New York City, heartily endorse President Roosevelt's statement expressing his disapproval of the persecution of the Jews in Germany. We know that such brutality is the logical outcome of persistent refusal of majorities to recognize the economic, civil and individual rights of minority groups regardless of race or creed.
>
> As members of an oppressed group in the United States of America, we sympathize with the Jewish minority group in Germany as can no others.
>
> It is the hope of this organization of Negro women that the people of this country will come to realize that the attainment of the ideal of American Democracy is possible only through good will and the application of economic, civil, and individual Justice to all.
>
> We recommend that a copy of this resolution be sent to the President [of the U.S.] and to the press.[19]

Dinner Session

From the time Eleanor Roosevelt, as featured speaker, helped to inaugurate the annual meeting's dinner session in 1937, it continued to develop as a grand Saturday evening event, culminating the yearly conference, except in '43 when a mass meeting substituted. In 1938, the *New York Age* pronouncement that the evening dinner "should count in Negro History," appeared apropos to others. Two years later, for example, when the event was first held in Washington--in the Dinning Room of the Department of Labor, beginning at 8:15 p.m.--it was thrilling enough for a council recorder to rhapsodize, “Everyone present felt that the dinner meeting was one of the most magnificent affairs ever held in Washington.”[20] With the exception of certain sessions in 1941, the dinner attracted the largest attendance at an annual meeting: from more than 200 at the small executive workshop in Chicago, to more than 400 at the regular assembly in Washington the preceding year.

Capable chairpersons, including Clara Burrill Bruce, Vivian Carter Mason, and Julia West Hamilton, exercised skill to insure the dinner’s success. Turkey was sometimes the entree and the cost per person extended to $1.50. But the annual gala was not for the faint-hearted. With a council officer recognizing the numerous special guests who always attended, with external organizations extending greetings, typically with multiple musical attractions, with the reading of committee reports and/or the “Conference Findings,” with presentations of flowers to designated individuals, and usually with more than one speaker--four in 1938--some programs appeared interminable.

Assuredly, fashion reporters had ample time to observe the attire of women attending. Hometown papers featured their own. For example, in ‘38, the *New York Age* reported the following: Mrs. Bessye J. Bearden was dressed in a “brown and gold afternoon frock and matching accessories; Mrs. Carita Roane, black afternoon gown, vari-colored chapeau and pearl jewelry. . .Mrs. Vivian Carter Mason, black afternoon frock [with] blue trimming and accessories . . . Mrs. Ollie Porter, burgundy velvet gowned and a tiny exquisite chapeau made wholly of vari-colored grapes.” The reporter also described the attire of at least ten others before concluding that there were "ever so many more prominent and stunningly gowned New Yorkers that it is impossible to name them all."[21]

The dinner showcased women and their concerns. Seemingly only two men were speakers. Aubrey Williams, Bethune's boss at NYA addressed the audience in '39. Walter White, executive secretary of the NAACP, followed two years later. The slender number of male orators emphasized the occasion's female thrust. Distinguished women were the NCNW's special, honored guests. Over five years they included Crystal Bird Fausett of Philadelphia, the first black woman to be elected to a state legislature; Frances Payne Bolton, Republican Congresswoman from Cleveland, Ohio; Nannie Helen Burroughs, courageous school founder in Washington; Jane Hunter, Cleveland social worker extraordinaire; and pioneer and distinguished individuals in the black women's national club movement: Mary Church Terrell, and Anna Murray of Washington, and Hallie Quinn Brown from Wilberforce, Ohio. Terrell basked in the status of both special guest and a dinner speaker. Other achievers and political doers mounting the podium included: Legislator Crystal Bird Fausett, Historian Mary Ritter Beard, Judge Jane Bolin, Diplomat Florence Jeffrey Harriman, Attorney-Journalist Marjorie McKenzie [Lawson], and Congresswoman Frances Payne Bolton. Bolton spoke at two dinner meetings: first as the wife of an Congressman Chester C. Bolton in '38; then as an Ohio Congresswoman in '41. Two years later she introduced in Congress a successful measure prohibiting segregation in federally sponsored nurse training programs.[22]

These achievers talked about women. At Chicago's "swank" downtown Women's Club in 1942, "brilliant" young Marjorie McKenzie begged listeners to support of the National Council of Negro Women and urged the organization to develop "a good, simple workable program. . . that can be used in every community of the United States."[23] While acknowledging the unjust status of African Americans, Crystal Bird Fausett, fresh from her 1938 legislative victory in Pennsylvania, emphasized "that Negro women have a future filled with hope." The National Association of Colored Women's first president, Mary Terrell, encouraged race sisters to "use their right of suffrage and ask for equal chances." Frances Bolton wished that black women would not be "too much Negro women, but Americans." Also, considering that "women have a knowledge of life and physical suffering that no man can ever know," Bolton thought that "both white and colored [women] should get together and try to understand each other."[24]

With several history books to her credit, either authored alone or with husband Charles, Mary Beard, an authority on women's social problems, pinpointed a commonality of women in all ages: they were a subject gender. She criticized a college education for inflicting injury on women by failing to teach them about the achievements of their own sex. And she affirmed that women "have always been at the center of life, making history--which, in great part, has been left unrecorded by man."[25]

In her first major speech after becoming the first black female judge in the country--a Mayor Fiorello La Guardia appointee to the Court of Domestic Relations in New York City--in late 1939, the young, attractive Jane Bolin sounded a trumpet for women. "Abroad we have war, savagery, butchery and chaos; at home we have poverty, disease, lynching, discrimination, jim-crow, bigotry and a lack of equality of opportunities," she said, "but the heritage of women to bring truth, beauty and justice out of all this is in itself a ray of light." Bolin emphasized that "women must take a practical interest in formulating public opinion, in articulating protests against injustices and in learning to appreciate the vast importance of the ballot and its use."[26]

In 1940, the principal dinner speaker, psychologically transported the audience beyond American shores. One of the first two United States female ambassadors, Florence Harriman, Minister to Norway, "stirringly recounted the heroism of Scandinavians," against Nazi Germany's aggression. Personalizing the European war, she related the situation of Sigrid Undset, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1928. This courageous woman "had sacrificed one son in the army during the Nazi invasion and had fled her country and come to America to tell the story in lecture engagements to a vast number of her spiritual allies in the new world." Apparently those in the audience could be numbered among Undset's allies, for the *Aframerican Woman's Journal* reported that Harriman's recounting of her story within the context of Norwegian resistance to the Nazis marked "the high note of courage and inspiration to the conference."[27]

White House Conference-Tea

With its politically plugged-in President, a special bonus the NCNW garnered by assembling in D.C., rather than elsewhere, was a conference and tea at the White House. As she did for other organizations, Eleanor Roosevelt gladly received NCNW delegates, for she deemed it an effective means of learning their work. Even though they were "the cream of American Negro womanhood," according to the Associated Negro Press, or "the finest type of women," as Bethune stated, the Council President took no chance that through lack of exposure, any one would act inappropriately.[28] Like a mother hen, she announced, "Now before you go [into the mansion] . . . I don't want anyone coming out of there with napkins or silverware or anything of that sort. If you want souvenirs," she admonished, "go downtown and buy them."[29] Bethune probably didn't mention the proper attire, for as the *Afro* women's editor professed, "There could scarcely be found a better dressed or more chic group of women" than those at the NCNW meeting.

Enthusiastically agreeing, *Courier* reporter Helen Jordan judged the collective clothing of council women "Sartorial Elegance."[30]

In 1940, four hundred and forty-four convention-goers enjoyed an interesting program at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. The First Lady spoke on "Women in [the] Club World and Organizations," during which she urged them to study closely local conditions as a preliminary to corrective measures. A general discussion turned on consumer education for homemakers; next, the National YMCA's Frances Harriet Williams explained NCNW aims and efforts. Mrs. Roosevelt then received two gifts, recently published: Editor Sue Thurman presented the first two editions of the *Aframerican Woman's Journal*; Mary Church Terrell, her autobiographical *A Colored Woman in a White World*. Later, in a smaller chamber, Mrs. Bethune introduced each individual to the First Lady, as they passed by, single file. From there, the women partook of tea or coffee and delicacies in the walnut paneled state dinning room.

The following year change occurred. In the "resplendent" East Room, Contralto Carol Brice, the Palmer-educated niece of Charlotte Hawkins Brown, sang a short program to piano and violin accompaniment. Barely with standing room, seven hundred people listened. While initially scheduled to speak at the White House as formerly, Mrs. Roosevelt had given her presentation earlier in the Labor Department Auditorium, due to the large attendance. Following the pattern set the previous year, once the East Room program ended, individual introductions were made, followed by refreshments.

Obviously, council women were elated to visit the official residence of the U.S. President. In 1940, their recorder noted that "the White House Conference was the most exciting pleasure of all."[31] That year, the women left the famous mansion around 4:00 p.m., eager to inform friends and organizations of their experiences. Partly because they did so well, about two hundred and fifty joined their ranks on the repeat visit in '41. At that time, NCNW members voted the occasion "one of the most enjoyable moments of their lives."[32]

Mary McLeod Bethune's Presidential Aura

NCNW members eagerly attended their yearly conclave in part because of the Founder-President. Clearly the organization's driving force, Mary McLeod Bethune breathed into the proceedings an elevated air. While frequently presiding, and using all of the leeway inherent in that function, opening remarks constituted her institutionalized time. That relatively short statement on November 26, 1938, welcomed about sixty participants and provided objectives and perspective.

> This is the thanksgiving season and I am sure our hearts are filled with gratitude for the privilege we share here together, of being here to think on the problems confronting us, our nation, and the world. I think seventy-five years afterwards [after the Emancipation Proclamation], it is very significant that a group of Negro women should gather from all sections of America, representing the large national organizations, as well as the original thoughts and ideas of the womanhood of our race to think calmly and thoughtfully of what we may do to help make the world better, to help make America better, to help make a wider path for the Negro constituency of this country.
>
> . . . . I am very happy to say that I think now we have just about gotten to the point where our feet are on the ground and our minds are made up as to the real purposes and ideas of our Council, and we are congratulating ourselves on the privilege of having so many of you at this early date of our existence to feel that you are a part and are willing to lend your influences and your thought matter to the building up of an organization that will be just a mouthpiece for the fourteen million Negroes of America an particularly for things regarding Negro women.
>
> . . . . To you and to those whom you represent we extend our

> greetings and our gratitude for your presence.[33]

Twenty-four months afterwards, Bethune incorporated into her annual statement recommendations regarding the organization's headquarters, journal, committee chairs, younger members, and local councils. Also, she offered a review of the past twelve months' progress. "This has been," she announced on October 25, 1940, "a historic year: the birth of our national magazine; the participation of our organization in the 75th Anniversary of the greatness of the Negro [referring to African Americans' seventy-five years of "freedom" since the end of the Civil War]; our participation in the great historic New York World's Fair; our very active participation in interpreting to the government of the United States, through the many channels of government, the need and possibilities of our group, and the insistency of our participation in the activities of the government." The year was historic also, the National Council Chief said, "for the representation and participation we have had in the several conferences of this country; in the thousands of letters we have sent out advocating the passing of the Anti-lynching Bill, and equalizing of the educational funds to the Negroes of the country."[34]

Three years later, against the backdrop of the United States in another world war, Bethune delivered a formal and extended speech. In part, she rallied her civilian troops to ally with others to make a better world. Her conclusions consisted of ringing declarations.

> Armed with a faith in what we as a united group may do, we go forth to the job before us, with an undying faith in God, and in the cause to which we are committed. We must be aware of our special problems and the nature of their ultimate solution. But we must also recognize that our problems are akin to the problems of the weak and oppressed everywhere, and that our rights, like the rights of all people, are rooted in the common humanity of all men. United — We build a free world.[35]

Undoubtedly, most council members responded to Bethune as did sister journalists, such as

Edra Mae Hilliard of the *Chicago Bee* who in 1941 pronounced her "the pride of all Negro women." The next year, after attending her first NCNW annual meeting, *Pittsburgh Courier*'s Bess Holloway described Bethune with flying adjectives: dynamic, lovable, gracious, great, diplomatic, strong-willed, judicious, forceful, magnetic, unconquerable, and incomparable. Holloway found it amazing that though obviously ill, this remarkable personality arrived early every day and sat "through the morning and afternoon sessions without taking time out for rest or refreshments." To greet early arrivals at the opening meeting, her strong will and determination shook off an "impending illness," for which a physician had treated her twenty minutes earlier.[36] In this same vein a year later, *Chicago Defender*'s Venice Spragg reported that "President Bethune's indomitable will to carry on in spite of recent illness. . . during the entire session" merited special mention.[37]

Viewing her as a phenomenon, the women's editor at the *Pittsburgh Courier* wrote about Bethune regularly. Julia Jones asserted that the "magic voice of that persuasive lady can stir somnolent pulses and give a whirl to laggard feet where no movement had ever been noticed before." Writing more expansively in 1941, she observed, "There is no stopping the dynamic Mary McLeod Bethune. There is not a woman in the country today who can match her leadership. Old, young, middle-aged and indifferent--they all fade when this colorful figure comes to the stage."[38]

Reaching Out

With Founder-President Mary McLeod Bethune's connection to "almost every movement for the advancement of the Negro," as researcher-editor Jessie P. Guzman would later write, the NCNW enjoyed excellent relations with front-line freedom-fighting organizations for blacks, including the NAACP, National Urban League, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. The council's challenge was taking part in mainstream society, in accordance with one of its fundamental objectives: to educate and encourage black women "to participate in civic, political, economic, and educational activities in the same manner as other Americans."[39] Collaborating with government programs was the most promising avenue for convincingly achieving this goal. In war-oriented Washington in the early 40's, the NCNW's task was compounded because, as usual, black women faced harsh racial injustice plus gender mistreatment. The government followed a decidedly discriminatory policy against women. Notably, defense employment for most practical purposes bypassed the female Secretary of Labor and her bureaucracy; instead, an exclusively male War Manpower Commission subsumed it. In relation to that body, women were supposed to be content with membership in an ineffectual Women's Advisory Commission.[40] The Women's Interest Section in the War Department proved to be a more promising women's niche in wartime Washington. Therefore, Mary Bethune determined that her organization would be associated with it. Regarding the private sector, she adopted the same attitude in relation to the mainline National Council of Women of the United States, which had stood for decades as a beacon for aspiring national organizations.

The Women's Interest Section in the War Department

In the autumn of '41, the relatively new Women's Interest Section (WIS) of the War Department's Bureau of Public Relations offered means through which women could cooperate with a war-oriented government program. WIS endeavored to sell army life to the soldiers' sweethearts and wives; to allay concerns about army living conditions; and to foster women's pride in their soldiers.[41] On October 13, 1941, just three days before the NCNW annual meeting in Washington, WIS convened a conference in the U.S. capital to organize a female advisory council. Attracting women like magnets, Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall greeted the parley at the morning session, and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt spoke at the luncheon. Later, with the conferees having banded into the anticipated advisory body, Mrs. Roosevelt had them for tea at the White House.

Representatives of thirty-one organizations attended the conference. Two organizations, the National Council for State Garden Clubs and the National Committee of Church Women, each sent two persons. Additionally, a female writer participated. Conferees represented diverse groups: sixteen independent female organizations, four auxiliaries to male-dominated bodies, three gender inclusive committees, and eight other gender-inclusive entities, such as the Salvation Army and the National Education Association. Christians and Jews, urbanites and rural folk, housewives and professionals, Northerners and Southerners joined together in a women's council; but no NCNW members, nor any other African Americans.[42]

Advance notice of the WIS meeting appeared in the *Pittsburgh Courier*. It concluded, "The National Council of Negro Women has been included [in the WIS conference] and will co-operate." NCNW life member Julia B. Jones, the *Courier*'s editor for the women's section, authored that assertion. While making a logical assumption, Jones' understanding of the torturous configurations of Jim Crow suggested that if the War Department slighted race sisters, she wanted to help make it an issue. This she did.

Seeing the *Courier*'s early announcement while lacking an invitation to the WIS conference, the NCNW President telephoned Secretary of War Henry Stimson and others for an explanation. Brigadier General A. D. Surles, chief of the Public Relations Bureau, informed her that "only 31 invitations had been sent out and no additions could possibly be made." Invitations had been restricted to organizations with memberships of at least 100,000. And, according to the War Department, no black women's group met that criteria. Given this, Bethune retorted that her National Council encompassed 800,000 members. The Department's recourse became "some mistake had been made." Nevertheless, the "mistake" remained unrectified.

The omission of ebony women in the WIS conference struck the government's black leadership corps "with the force of a six-inch shell." The day after the parley, Bethune's ire may have increased while reading about the WIS conclave in the *Washington Post*. Having failed to gain admission to the meeting through friendly, personal persuasion before it occurred, immediately afterwards Bethune resorted to shrieking public protest. The message she conveyed to the War Department Czar circulated among several government officials and appeared in some form throughout black America.

> I protest the apparent discrimination in excluding Negro representation at the meeting held Monday, October 13. We cannot accept any excuse that the exclusion of Negro representation was an oversight.
>
> . . . .
>
> We are anxious for you to know that we want to be and insist upon being considered a part of our American democracy, not something apart from it. We know from experience that our interests are too often neglected, ignored or scuttled unless we have effective representation in the formative stages of these projects and proposals.
>
> We are not blind to what is happening. We are not humiliated. We are incensed! We believe what we have asked is what we all desire--a unity of action, thought and spirit. We still seek this end and urge upon you the that Negro representation be included in this advisory council and in all future plans sponsored for the

> purpose of promoting our morale and strengthening our defense.
>
> We militantly and respectfully speak through this voice for the Negro womanhood of America.[43]

Finally, about three weeks after its formation, the army invited the NCNW to become a member of the Women's Interest Section Advisory Council. Bethune's letter and behind-the-scene pressure, assuredly from Eleanor Roosevelt and others, had convinced the War Department that it had indeed made a mistake to initially exclude African American women. Subsequently, the NCNW sent representatives to various WIS meetings held in different cities. Moreover, Mary McLeod Bethune participated in planning a series of regional conferences.[44]

From the perspective of the country's large defense picture, the NCNW-WIS controversy and resolution may have appeared inconsequential. Nevertheless, it is of interest for several reasons. The episode demonstrated white women's lack of initiative in bringing darker women into affairs potentially impacting all American women. It illustrated the energy black women expended in gaining an acknowledgment that their white counterparts took for granted. Also, it marked a milestone in the blossoming NCNW. Like no other single incident, it vindicated Bethune's concept of a National Council. "The scattered work and independent programs of national organizations of Negro women," just as Bethune had previously asserted, "needed the strength that unity could bring."[45] Unity welded to apparently large numbers, made a difference. Two years later, NCNW Executive Secretary Jeanetta Brown would rattle off numerous government programs involving the National Council in part because it had emphatically reached out to participate in the activities of the War Department, an arch-typical stiff-necked, dyed-in-wool segregationist bureaucracy. Gaining a toehold there facilitated NCNW's input into other government agencies.

The War Department was key also because on the horizon loomed its precedent-breaking Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, which Massachusetts Representative Edith Nourse Rogers had introduced in Congress in May 1941. Membership on the WIS advisory council was the initial means through which Bethune and her organization would impact that army. Moreover, the NCNW-War Department controversy prompted some private voluntary institutions to lower their racial bars. Certainly it appears more than coincidental that, while the U.S. National Council of Women had established relations with the NCNW in the 30's, only after the NCNW protested the WIS treatment did this essentially white women's federation admit the black council.[46]

The National Council of Women of the United States

While participating in several mainstream women's forums, whether ad hoc, such as the Woman's Centennial Congress in November 1940, or reoccurring, like the *New York Herald Tribune* Conference, NCNW officials probably prized their membership in the U.S. Council of Women most. That organization visioned itself as a "confederation of workers committed to overthrow all forms of ignorance and injustice, and to the application of the Golden Rule to society, custom and law." Consisting of the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union, National Woman's Party, Hadassah, American Women's Voluntary Services, National Women's Relief Society, and other such white organizations, it constituted one of the chief structured means outside of government through which black women leaders had interacted for over forty years with their white counterparts.

Bethune, in particular, appreciated membership in the U.S. council. As president of the National Association of Colored Women in the 1920s, then its only black affiliate, she and her officer corps extended their contacts and enlarged their vision relative to the possibilities and potential of organized women to make a difference in public affairs. She thought the U.S. council "a great and powerful group of organized women." After her organization joined it, she proclaimed, "We are not separate and apart from the womanhood of our country, so that whatever is being done for either the nation or the individual is also our responsibility and our field of service. And wherever women are working for good citizenship, social and economic welfare, community health, nutrition, child welfare, civil liberties, civilian defense and other projects for the advancement of the people--there also we must be," she maintained, "though we work late, while others sleep." In consideration of United States war posture, Mary Bethune observed, "I cannot state too forcefully how important it is that we Negro women play our rightful role in the events now taking place in the nation," for they would fundamentally affect all.[47]

In the early 1940's, the U.S. Council was led by a woman sensitive to the common interests that should bond her organization with its black affiliates. Lucy R. Milligan of New York demonstrated a concern for participating in NCNW activities somewhat akin to Eleanor Roosevelt's. Never before had the leadership of the U.S. council so accommodated ebony women. A telling example of Milligan's attitude is her response to learning of white policemen in Montgomery, Alabama, attacking a black army nurse. In October 1942 she wrote Bethune, "While we are shocked beyond words at this evidence of cruelty, we would like to have your advice as to the best way we can be of assistance in this matter." Continuing, she declared, "In our eagerness to be of help, it might be that we would make a move which would prove of more harm than good. Therefore, we feel it would be wise not to act in the matter until we have heard from you." President Bethune replied, "I see no harm in stating your opinion of such treatment of our women who are serving our country."[48]

It was one thing for the U.S. Council Chief to extend herself to the NCNW, it was another for the NCNW to be incorporated into the internal decision-making of her organization. True to form, Bethune wrote Milligan and her successor repeatedly about placing black women on the U.S. council's committees, rosters, and programs. The best that this council had done in forty years was to elect black women as fourth vice-presidents; but only after Bethune had run for that office and lost at the Detroit meeting in 1925. Realizing that only their racism prevented someone of Bethune's stature--a founder and president of a growing junior college--from achieving an office, members of the U.S. council later elected as fourth V.P. Sallie Stewart, Bethune's lack-luster and politically inept successor in the National Association of Colored Women. The National Association's first president, Mary Church Terrell, obliquely implied in *A Colored Woman in a White World* that the greatest furor between white and black women in the U.S. council occurred at the end of Stewart's tenure as V.P. because no African American replaced her as an officer. Some sisters were incensed! Again, belatedly, the U.S. council fixed matters by ensconcing the president of the National Association of Colored Women in the position of fourth vice-president.[49] Thinking this inadequate, later Bethune appealed to Milligan.

> The National Council of Negro Women requests that the Nominating Committee place on its slate the name of a member of the National Council of Negro Women as one of the Vice-Presidents of the National Council of Women of the United States.[50]

In 1943 one thing was certain: even though by then the U.S. council had three black affiliates among the seventeen participating in its biennial meeting at the Belmont Plaza in New York, it was not going to have two black vice-presidents, no matter how brilliant they may have been. At the same time, Milligan was not predisposed to ignore Bethune. Therefore, nine days after the NCNW President's request and after the U.S. council had elected officers, the organization enthusiastically elected Bethune an honorary vice-president. Having attended the morning session, Bethune skipped the one in the afternoon when the election occurred. When officially notified, she responded to the distinction with humble gratitude. Yet black women remained distant from the U.S. council's decision-making and internal operations in New York. Its fourth vice-president, African American Ada Belle DeMent, lived in Mineral Wells, Texas.[51]

Internal Operations

Common concerns exist for all vibrant and growing organizations. Among them are membership, leadership, and finances, areas indicating the health and progress of the group. The National Council of Negro Women advanced as most organizations. In the fore-mentioned categories between 1938 and '43, it experienced ups and downs, but continued progressing.

Memberships

By paying the small registration fee at its annual meeting, any woman could call herself a council member. The NCNW offered, however, primarily three types of memberships. One was individual life membership, which supplied a needed source of income at $50.00 per person. Another was chapter membership, activated in '39 under the leadership of Ollie Porter with women belonging to the council's national affiliates in the New York City area. Membership in chapters became an increasingly popular means for women of color to act in unison on local concerns and to implement NCNW programs. The other type of NCNW membership was through national affiliates. It constituted not so much a means for large numbers of women to actively work in the council, but for its official representatives to participate in the council's decision-making and to legitimize its existence by supplying large membership figures critical to the council concept.

Therefore, national affiliates were indispensable. The NCNW fished constantly for new ones. It spent considerable time catching the Ladies Auxiliary of the International Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, which prided itself as a group for *working* black women. Yet the affiliate withdrew in 1945, after only a year. Historian Deborah Gray White argues that this decision bespoke different class and gender ideologies, even though asserting that auxiliary women and council women came from the same class and occupied "extensive" common ground. Some others may find validity in a class-gender interpretation for the auxiliary's departure from the council, regardless of numerous contradictions therein. In this situation two points appear pertinent: the auxiliary's national convention voted to join the NCNW in 1942, although its leaders failed to take action for two years; and its Washington, D.C., affiliate maintained a working relationship with the NCNW regardless of objections. These facts suggest that the dispositions of the Ladies Auxiliary's leaders, President Helena Wilson and Secretary-Treasurer Rosina Tucker, constituted the decisive factors in the auxiliary's withdrawal from the NCNW. At a nitty-gritty level, apparently they believed their status or that of their organization was diminished by National Council affiliation; or they valued an independent organizational identity more than blurring it in a collectivism for the common good.[52]

The fierce independence of another organization, the National Association of Colored Women, which for decades had been black women's largest secular body, was a fact that Bethune anticipated moderating enough for its affiliation with the NCNW. At the National Association's 1941 convention in Oklahoma City, Bethune propagandized the issue. She declared to the assembly the following.

> I feel this is the opportune time for the women of my race to pool their interests. And through the channels of the National Council of Negro Women, we can pool our resources and bring together these various groups for the strengthening of our powers and influences.

As a president emeritus and principal trustee of its headquarters building, Mary McLeod Bethune continued to be intimately involved in National Association affairs. Some other association presidents, past and present, identified with the council, from Mary Church Terrell to Ada Belle DeMent. Moreover, DeMent's immediate successor, Christine Smith, then deeply enmeshed in council affairs, as well as other successors were or would be NCNW members. Yet the twentieth century would slip away without the incorporation of the National Association into the first national coalition of black women's organizations. Too many National Association leaders felt betrayed by Bethune for starting a sister society and were irked by the perception that it had eclipsed their organization as America's foremost civic body of black women. Thus they were preoccupied with establishing a high organizational profile separate from it.[53]

While the National Association could not be corralled into NCNW membership, in 1940 eight other organizations could. These paid from $25 to $50 dues. The next year, the NCNW counted fourteen national organizations. Six professional and occupationally-oriented groups headed the roster: the Beauty Culturist League, National Association of Business and Professional Women, National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses, Iota Phi Lambda Sorority (business), Lambda Kappa Mu Sorority (business), and Phi Delta Kappa Sorority (teaching). Broadly-based sororities originally founded on college campuses constituted the second largest category of affiliates: Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta, Sigma Gamma Rho, and Zeta Phi Beta. Other member organizations were the Daughter Elks--officially the Grand Temple, Daughters of the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World (IBPOEW), Women's Parent Mite Missionary Society of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Republican National Association of Women, and Achievement Clubs.

In late 1943, the council touted seven additional affiliates. Three existed as auxiliaries to other groups: Women's Auxiliary to the National Dental Association, Women's Auxiliary to the National Medical Association, and Matrons Guild, comprising the wives of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity members. Female organizations in connectional churches constituted two other national affiliates: Woman's Home and Foreign Missionary Society, AME Church, and Woman's Home and Foreign Missionary Society, AME Zion Church. Another member originated in partisan politics, the National Democratic Women's Association. And, only founded in 1942 was the National Association of Jeanes Supervisors, consisting of ranking teachers.[54]

Since so few reliable numbers are available, the combined membership of NCNW national affiliates is guess-work at its worst. In 1940, for example, the Daughters Elks with its unrestrictive membership claimed 43,000; the little-known Achievement Clubs, 117. In between the Republican Women and Beauticians weighed in with 22,000 and 21,000 respectively. Other organizations failed to report their numbers.[55] The public's lack of adequate figures gave the hyperbole-prone Bethune license to assert in the early 1940's, as she did to the War Department, that the NCNW had 800,000 members.[56] Nevertheless, the NCNW was a weak entity--certainly, no where near the muscle that an 800,000 strong council suggested. Therefore, although always commanding loyal followers, in a sense Mary Bethune was the NCNW.

Leadership Cadre

The NCNW's leadership corps suffered from the deaths of three officers. Two, both Philadelphians, occurred in 1940: Third Vice President Abbie Johnson and Treasurer and long-running Bethune pal Addie Dickerson. The new treasurer Bessye Beardon of New York, died three years later. Occurring a month before the annual meeting in her hometown, Bearden's death hit the organization particularly hard. While all effective officers worked satisfactorily with Bethune, extrovert and well-respected community activist Bearden was doubly close. This deputy collector of the Third Internal Revenue District had been very prominent in a major Bethune-Cookman College fund-raiser in New York. "The National Council of Negro Women bows in humble submission to the will of the Father we love and serve," began Bethune's condolences to Bearden's family, "in removing from us one of the most staunch, loyal, sacrificing, and understanding members of our National Council. . . ."[57]

Despite such loss, in 1943 the NCNW still maintained notable leaders, beginning with President Mary Bethune. New offices added since the late 1930's were registrar, auditor, and historian, filled respectively by Harriet C. Hall, Harriet Shadd Butcher, and Mary Church Terrell. The four vice-presidents, consecutively listed, were Vivian Carter Mason, Alma Illery, Edith Sampson [Clayton], and Arenia Mallory. Other officers were Jeanetta Brown, executive secretary, Ethel Ramos Harris, recording secretary; Elizabeth Ross Gordon, treasurer; and Sadie Mossell Alexander, parliamentarian. The leadership consisted also of four at-large executive committee members: Julia Pate Borders, Rosa L. Gragg, Hattie I. James, and Audley Moore. Moreover, the editor-in-chief and circulation manger of the NCNW's quarterly were respectively Sue Bailey Thurman and Harriet Curtis Hall. Other NCNW leaders chaired major committees.[58]

Probably the biggest NCNW leadership ruckus occurred at the annual meeting in 1941, because strong factions expected Bethune to loosen her grip on the body, in accordance with the constitutional necessity to elect a different president. Bethune shocked them. Just before the Nominating Committee was to report, she calmly interjected, "'If I am your president,' and then with marked emphasis, 'and I shall be your next president, I propose to have creditable offices in the downtown area.'" A "tomb-like hush" swept the assembly. The hundreds of delegates withered at this challenge and the prospect of defying it.[59] When they found voices again, some probably said quietly "all kinds of nasty things about Mrs. Bethune. . . and were ready to murder her."[60] Nonetheless, they amended the constitution so that the Founder-President could remain in office indefinitely.

Until 1943, NCNW staffers received only token remuneration, if that. Counted therein was Oberlin-educated Sue Bailey Thurman, whom Bethune appointed to edit the proposed NCNW periodical in 1939. Conceiving and developing it "to fight the battle of the Negro woman above the conflict," the next year, Thurman brought out the *Aframerican Woman's Journal*. Over the years, this quarterly constituted "a literary accomplishment which has commanded the respect and commendation of literary critics in many areas of journalism," and which numerous agencies and institutions had requested. Thurman edited the periodical until mid 1944, when she relocated from Washington to San Francisco, with her illustrious husband, theologian Howard Thurman.[61] In that same year, the NCNW hired Hilda M. Orr, formerly of the Baltimore Urban League and the National Youth Administration, in part to edit its new monthly newsletter, TELEFACT. It provided members with news of programs, affiliates, council personalities, and general interest topics.

The pivotal staffer, however, was not an editor but the executive secretary. Between 1938 and 1943, the NCNW benefitted from five of them, beginning with Clara Burrill Bruce. They performed reasonably well, considering that all but Florence Norman had other jobs on which they worked full-time until Jeanetta Brown came along. At the '39 convention, Bruce submitted no report and illness prevented her presence. Thereafter, she vanished from the NCNW radar. Her replacement was Carita V. Roane, the manager of the 135th Street Office of the New York State Employment Service. The following year, Florence K. Norman of Flushing, New York occupied the post. In 1941, Dorothy I. Height, general secretary of Washington's Phyllis Wheatley YWCA, took over, serving until the council made the position full-time and salaried. At some point, Bethune would have borrowed Height full-time from her secure "Y" career, had that been possible. Instead, she gained a commitment from the "Y" for Height to serve as the "Y"'s representative to the council.[62] A former Washington lobbyist with Alpha Kappa Alpha's Non-Partisan League and director of the Detroit Association of Women's Clubs, the full-time, salaried Jeanetta Brown began work in April 1943.[63] Also, in the same month, the organization hired full-time stenographer, Julia A. Sneed. Afterwards, it zoomed to new operational heights.

Prior to Welch's appointment, President Bethune called on various individuals to assist in maintaining the council's internal operations. In this regard and others, her NYA secretary and NCNW member Arabella Denniston was a right hand. Sometimes when Bethune needed information or to get things done quickly, it was easier to reach her, rather than an executive secretary in New York or later, an over-burdened one in Washington. When Bethune was unavailable, especially due to frequent travel and reoccurring illnesses, 'Bella,' as loved ones called her, kept NCNW affairs moving. In September 1940, for example, she informed her boss, "I have called Mrs. [Sue] Thurman and Mrs. [Julia West] Hamilton on Council matters, and Mrs.

Thurman is to come by the house tonight to go over all correspondence we have had concerning the October meeting."[64]

While working amicably, as the preceding suggests, sometimes NCNW leaders quarreled, as in the summer of '41, when the dissemination of the *Aframerican Woman's Journal* became a bone of contention between Editor Sue Thurman and Executive Secretary Florence Norman, who had management responsibilities for the journal. While pledging to cooperate with the New York-based Secretary, the Editor, in Washington, relinquished little. When President Bethune requested Norman to send one hundred copies of the magazine to Thurman, Norman balked, replying that the reasons for doing so were "too flimsy." Moreover, she chastised the Council President for condoning "unbusinesslike" procedures. Bethune confessed, "I am chagrined and disappointed." Thurman threatened to quit. Norman did the same, as far as the periodical was concerned. President Bethune communicated to both that if the three of them could not resolve the matter, she wanted them to "stand still" until a meeting of NCNW executives could determine the next step.

In the fall, the issue was settled definitively. Norman lost her office as executive secretary to Washington-based Dorothy Height, who had sought it at Bethune's request. Thurman remained magazine editor. Publicly, the Council President praised both Norman and Thurman. She appreciated "the Editor. . .and the Executive Secretary for. . . cooperation in making our official journal a significant contribution to the literary expression of Negro womanhood." Moreover, in a move the '41 conference excitedly applauded, the President appointed as National Organizer of local councils Florence K. Norman.

Undoubtedly, other undercurrents divided NCNW leaders. In those, Bethune's insights into organizational work--nothing is easy and one must work with individuals harmoniously--

served her well. She shared such thoughts with Sue Thurman and Florence Norman. To the Executive Secretary, the experienced President had declared, "I know the work of the Council is a hard job. . . I have always found whatever I had to do with people and for people has been difficult. They have different minds, different interpretations and different temperaments." To the Editor, she had asserted, "In dealing with people all my life. . . I am very glad that I have been able to so take suggestions and criticism, whether constructive or otherwise, in a way that I could make myself amenable to their service. I have had to swallow a number of things to do that but at this stage of the game, I still find myself capable of doing just that."[65]

As if this situation had not been taxing enough for President Bethune, age 66, during the next year a former council first vice president and close friend assailed the organization publicly, an act Bethune thought unconscionable. She had advised council members earlier, "If we are weak, let us show our weakness in here together. Don't go out and distribute that weakness to others. You weaken the whole machine. . . If you have any fault to find. . .you should bring [it here]," she maintained. "When we go out there with these little restless criticisms, it makes it pretty hard for us."[66] Fellow educator Charlotte Hawkins Brown, founder-president of the secondary Palmer Institute in Sedalia, North Carolina, had more than "little restless criticisms." She revealed them in a newspaper interview during October 1942. The NCNW was an "air castle" and a "myth" to the average black woman, she charged. Its objectives were not sufficiently defined to the public. Moreover, she declared the following.

> I think fear dominates the thinking of some of the women, even those of strong minds. They are afraid to disagree with the leader who, I know, is far too broad to wish to guide the thinking of this intelligent group of followers--but they do practically nothing

> after they leave the meeting. We do not have a
> program of action.

Bethune was dumbfounded! Historian Joyce Hanson reports that it took her seven months to recover sufficiently to respond. “That stand, coming from you, was to me a ‘Pearl Harbor Stab.’ It was ‘below the belt,’ Charlotte,” she asserted. “It took something out of me that only a friend could take out.” While Bethune thought that she could never feel the same towards this special educator-friend, time and a forgiving heart would work magic.[67]

Finances

After visiting the member-supported headquarters of the National Council of Jewish Women in New York, NCNW Executive Secretary Jeanetta Brown reported that it had forty-six paid employees, including five department secretaries and an executive secretary, plus its own mailing and mimeographing office. This contrasted starkly with the rudimentary operations of black women’s voluntary societies, including the NCNW. In 1938, the plain-talking Charlotte Hawkins Brown had blurted, “Our poverty is one of the distressing, pathetic things in our lives. . . [There is] no money to run this organization and we represent the well-to-do!” Two years later, this point was re-emphasized when the Women’s Auxiliary to the National Medical Association, or the organized wives of physicians, claimed that it could not afford to pay NCNW dues.[68] The scarcity of money that year caused Bethune to become teary-eyed and the NCNW annual assembly to stand and applaud when it was announced that Margaret Bowen of New Orleans had wired a donation of $25.00.

Money problems continued to dog the council. In ‘41 Bethune moaned, “I am more deeply concerned about the financial situation of our organization than I can express.” But other commitments, especially to Bethune-Cookman College and NYA, prevented her from serious NCNW fundraising.[69] The organization's quarterly helped to create the cash deficiency. Bethune informed council women in 1941 that it "must be placed upon a sound financial basis which can result only from your consistent support and participation." Nevertheless, a year later the NCNW had owed the printer of the *Aframerican Woman's Journal* for six months. Consequently, he had withheld the periodical until the organization paid.[70]

A financial turn-about occurred in 1943 when President Bethune formally presented to Rosenwald Fund officials a council budget for $10,220, of which she asked for $6,000. This budget broke down as follows.

Executive Secretary	$ 2400
Office Secretary	1620
Magazine (publication and distribution)	1600
Travel and Promotion	2000
Monthly Bulletin (8 issues per year)	800
Office Supplies	800
Telephone rental, etc.	900
TOTAL	$10,220 per year

At the time Bethune admitted, "I say that we need this very speedily because I am seriously handicapped and embarrassed in carrying forward the work." She received the requested grant, with the understanding that it was a one-time supplement and that the NCNW would accent "race relations."[71] In speaking to NCNW members about internal operations, Secretary Brown gave credit where it was due. "The entire office set-up has been made possible largely through the ingenuity, resourcefulness and personal concern of our national President for the work of the council."[72] Whether the NCNW could maintain operations at the 1943 level once Rosenwald money disappeared was an open question.

Wartime Emphases

During 1940 as portended in the shooting war in the Atlantic between the Axis Powers and the United States over cargoes destined for the Allies, the U.S. was going to enter World War II one way or another. The war was revolutionizing the country. All military services instituted female components, a development causing the National Council of Negro Women to agitate for equal access. Excluding the female military, discussed herein are the organization's wartime preoccupations; namely, black female employment, initiatives to prevent more race riots, and displays of patriotism.

Jobs for Black Women

In 1940, the Arsenal of Democracy multiplied the labor force, especially by hiring millions of new workers to manufacture the implements of war. Yet government and defense industries employed African Americans at a snail's pace. In a well-publicized letter, appearing even in the *Congressional Record*, the NCNW Chief wrote President Franklin Roosevelt, broaching employment through the prism of patriotism. "At a time like this, when the basic principles of democracy are being challenged at home and abroad, when racial and religious hatreds are being engendered, it is vitally important that the Negro, as a minority group in this nation, express anew his faith in your leadership and his unswerving adherence to a program of national defense adequate to insure the perpetuation of the principles of democracy. I approach you," Mary McLeod Bethune averred, "as one of a vast army of Negro women who recognize that we must face the dangers that confront us with a united patriotism." Then this women's icon introduced the subservient status of African Americans that justified the missive. "We, as a race, have been fighting for a more equitable share of those opportunities which are fundamental to every American citizen who would enjoy the economic and family security which a true democracy guarantees," she asserted. "Now we come as a group of loyal, self-sacrificing women who feel they have a right and a solemn duty to serve their nation." Bethune dealt directly with employment as follows.

> In the ranks of Negro womanhood in America are to be found ability and capacity for leadership, for administrative as well as routine tasks, for the types of service so necessary in a program of national defense. These are citizens whose past records at home and in war service abroad, whose unquestioned loyalty to their country and its ideals, and whose sincere and enthusiastic desire to serve you and the nation indicate how deeply they are concerned that a more realistic American democracy, as visioned by those not blinded by racial prejudices, shall be maintained and perpetuated.
>
> I offer my own services without reservation, and urge you, in the planning and work which lies ahead, to make such use of the services of qualified Negro women as will assure the thirteen and a half million Negroes in America that they, too, have earned the right to be numbered among the active forces who are working towards the protection of our democratic stronghold.[73]

Regardless of Bethune's logic, President Roosevelt was unwilling to antagonize Southern Congressional racists inclined to further impede his legislative initiatives. Consequently, little happened--that is, until a year later, when labor leader A. Phillip Randolph and NAACP executive secretary Walter White threatened to put 100,000 black folks in the streets of the nation's capital to protest discriminatory employment practices. Bethune was prepared to mobilize NCNW members to march on Washington, as were other credible black leaders, for the idea of a mass march captivated both African American leaders and the masses.[74] Roosevelt was unwilling to let a black demonstration further inflame race hatreds and dramatically highlight the contradiction of the United States, on the one hand, gearing up to fight for democracy abroad when, on the other, denying it to a major segment of its own citizens. Therefore, on June 25, 1941, Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 barring discrimination in defense industries and government and authorizing the establishment of the Fair Employment Practices Committee "to 'receive and investigate complaints of discrimination in violation of the provisions of this order' and to 'take appropriate steps to redress grievances which it finds valid.'"[75]

Against the backdrop of the Executive Order, the next month Bethune addressed "Mother National," the regular assembly of the National Association of Colored Women. She inspired it to believe in the possibilities of black women wielding influence in the federal establishment. It made no difference that out of the 220,000 women in government, other than herself she could only count ten black sisters with substantive responsibility. Since those ten were victories, she proudly ticked off names: Frances Williams in the Council of National Defense, Constance Daniel and Jennie B. Moton in the Farm Security Administration, Venita Lewis in the Children's Bureau of the Department of Labor, Corienne Robinson in the U.S. Housing Authority, Crystal Byrd Faucett in the Office of Civilian Defense, and Ora Brown Stokes, Venice Spraggs, Pauline Redmond, and Nell Hunter in the National Youth Administration.[76]

Interestingly, all but two or three of the ten female professionals, plus Bethune, worked in temporary agencies. This was no fluke. While the number of ebony women in the federal government tripled during the war, those in white collar work were lodged mostly in temporary positions in the capital city. Moreover, regardless of symbolism, a woman of color in the Labor Department could not change the bureaucracy's institutionalized approach to women of color. Neither its U.S. Employment Service nor its Women's Bureau aggressively helped black women attain greater career opportunities.

Nonetheless, the improving federal employment prospects of African American women, due to Executive Order 8802 and a national policy of recruiting women for an unprecedented variety of work in an economy of labor shortages, were mirrored in the private sector. Within months of the Order, 400,000 ebony women walked out of domestic service, their primary employment opportunity. Half of those in farming, their secondary field, also found higher pay, shorter hours, and more benefits in other employment. But most of these women did not enter traditional white female domains of clerical and sales work. While unions had a hand in this, typically managerial intransigence consigned increasing numbers of black women to jobs men had previously held, which more often than not, were "arduous, dirty, hot, or otherwise disagreeable." Therefore, a significant percentage of black female industrial workers became Rosie the Riveter with a Vengeance.[77]

Even though they still fared worst than all other major groups, wartime employment opportunities improved the status of African American women, and the FEPC promoted this lift. Consequently, conservatives made it a demolition target; liberals sought to bolster it. Crusading with the latter, Bethune worked with A. Phillip Randolph in his continuing March on Washington Movement and subsequent National Council for a Permanent FEPC. Her council women did likewise. New York members, notably First Vice-President Vivian Carter Mason, Treasurer Bessye Bearden, and Mabel B. Staupers, president of its nursing affiliate, took the lead in drumming up support among women's groups, black and white. They assembled representatives of ten national organizations, including the Women's Trade Union League, U.S. National Council of Women, and the Interracial Council of the Federation of Churches, for dialogue on the issue in

April 1943. The conferees wanted the retention, strengthening, and expansion of the FEPC, and said so in terms specific to the dilemmas of the committee at the time. Several of their recommendations were, in fact, effected. "The President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice is pleased to acknowledge the constant support of your organization," a representative wrote Bethune in January 1944. Through telegrams and conferences, the NCNW continued to lobby the administration for a strong FEPC. But having the final say were Southern Congressional conservatives, who killed it after the war.[78]

Supporting a constructive government unit was not the only way the NCNW dealt with minority employment. It conducted wartime employment clinics in major cities during June 1943, according to the employment program developed at the Chicago annual meeting. This was a timely initiative in itself; also, timely in light of Charlotte Brown's charges that the council was meaningless to average ebony women and did nothing between annual meetings. Apparently, the clinics made an impact. When a national committee, backed by Rosenwald money, decided "to help make the Negro worker conscious of the responsibilities resting upon him to make his future employment status more secure," it unanimously tapped the NCNW's Jeanetta Welch Brown as its executive secretary for a "Hold Your Job," program. The NCNW "loaned" her out for two months and the committee gave the NCNW funds to employ a stand-in during Brown's absence. It worked well for all concerned. "Hold Your Job Week," September 12-18, 1943, was celebrated in black communities in almost every state.[79]

Certainly, the "Hold Your Job" program was win-win for the National Council. Due to the organization's high profile, women in several large cities determined to organize NCNW chapters. Under Venice T. Spraggs, chairperson of the Employment Department, the council vigorously encouraged black women to do all possible to retain their jobs, and thus reduce the possibilities of large scale dismissals after the war. Distributing a thousand manuals on ways to organize an employment clinic and printing and circulating five thousand pamphlets for female workers called "Wake-Up Your Job is in Danger," the NCNW sponsored clinics in cities employing large numbers of black women, particularly in government and industry. Clinics considered the workers' dress, behavior, attitude, maximization of training opportunities, contributions to the war effort, and participation in labor organizations. Executive Secretary Brown thought that the Washington, D.C. clinics, held at the Hearthstone War Workers Club and reaching seven hundred men and women, exemplified a good model. "Experts in fields of counseling, charm, make-up, dress, job and public decorum," she declared, "participated in helping to make this series of clinics a success."[80]

Response to Race Riots

In 1943, race riots erupted in Mobile, Alabama, Beaumont, Texas, Los Angeles, Detroit, and Harlem. The worst occurred in Detroit, which in three years had attracted 500,000 new residents, of which 50,000 were African Americans. They came for work in the automotive-turned-war industries, for good pay and a better life. As in urban America generally, Detroit whites insured that black were confined to woefully small ghettos devoid of the necessities for adequate group living, regardless of residents' ability to pay. Only Detroit was worst. The race baiters and demagogues spewed their poison unchecked and government responded remarkably ineptly to racial crisis. The riot started on Sunday evening, June 20, 1943, and continued for three days. Officials hesitated to call in federal troops until rioting engulfed three-fourths of the city. By that time, in the midst of extensive damaged property, policemen had killed seventeen blacks and watched while others were beaten. Non-law enforcers had killed eight blacks and nine whites. More than a thousand were injured.[81]

With a sharpened focus in 1943 on building "public goodwill through programs involving intra-racial, inter-racial and international relationships," the NCNW acted as an "ambassador of good will," particularly to whites at home. Consequently, race riots gravely disturbed it. The council desired "all thinking women throughout the country to lend their strength and energies to any existing committees already established for the purpose of preventing future race riots." Also, it wanted them to telegram the President and the Attorney General with their riot concerns.[82] After the one in Detroit, Bethune expressed her firm belief that the President needed to address the fundamental reasons for riots, and thereby prevent them. She told him this.

> The National Council of Negro Women representing 800,000 women in all walks of life views with great alarm the growing racial tensions in America, which are already flaring in tragic violence in both the North and the South. America's victory report, indeed, America's future, is at stake. A straight forward determined statement and program of action from you that will reach the core of this problem is imperative. We urge you as President of the United States and as Commander-in-Chief of the American Armed Forces to take some firm steps immediately in suppressing this violence. We know you as the courageous leader who will not hesitate to act when the need for action is apparent.[83]

Bethune probably wasted time writing Franklin D. Roosevelt. He had and would continue to be tepid on civil rights issues, perhaps intending to address them after the war.

Of greater interest than the letter to FDR were Bethune's interpretation of and antidote for collective racial violence. Viewing riots from a global-historical perspective in her essay, "Certain Unalienable Rights," she asserted, "Just as the Colonists at the Boston Tea Party wanted 'out' from under tyranny and oppression and taxation without representation, the Chinese want 'out,' the Indians want 'out,' and colored Americans want 'out.'" She believed that the recent riots had developed in part from the people's deeply felt resentment against the mistreatment of blacks in uniform, and "against restriction and oppression." There existed on the one hand, "the growing internal pressure of Negro masses to break through the wall of restriction which restrains them from full American citizenship;" on the other, "the unwillingness of white America to allow any appreciable breach in the wall." Countering those who attributed rioting to black leaders or rabble-rousers, Bethune emphasized that the greatest grievance of an African American was "the failure of the Army and his government to protect him in the uniform of his country from actual assault by civilians." "These things are the intimate experiences of the masses themselves," she declared. "They know them and feel them intensely and resent them bitterly. . . . At the same time," she maintained, "they see around them unlimited opportunities offered to other groups to serve their country in the armed forces, to be employed at well-paying jobs, to get good housing financed by private concerns and FHA [Federal Housing Administration] funds."[84]

Affirmations of Patriotism

The NCNW led African American women into celebrating "We Serve America Week," July 4-10, 1943. The first day commemorated the country's birthday; the last, Mary McLeod Bethune's. The NCNW President viewed the activity as "interpreting to all Americans the principle of interdependence of all peoples." She stated that it was "to demonstrate to all America the contributions made by Negro women to our war effort and to the support of our democratic ideals." More specifically, the week was to emphasize black women's role in the war effort; to promote the sale of war bonds and stamps; to encourage all interested parties to urge President

Roosevelt to racially integrate all female military services; to honor Bethune on her birthday; and to raise money for the council. To implement the last two goals, the council solicited from each member a Bethune-birthday gift of $1.00 for its treasury; from each cooperating organization, purchase of printed red tags--from NCNW--to be worn on clothing.[85]

Famed cartoonist E. Simms Campbell drew a poster embodying the week's major objective: minority women working in behalf of country. It featured idealized side views of three dignified and serious-looking black women walking with shoulders back, heads up, and eyes focused ahead. Clutching a tool, one was clad in factory overalls and a visor; another appeared in a nurse's cap and dress accented with a victory pin; and the third wore a military uniform. The poster could be had for the asking and it covered the Summer-1943 issue of the *Aframerican Woman's Journal*.

Eleanor Roosevelt commended the We Serve America concept, as did the presidents of the National Council of Jewish Women, National Council of Women of the United States and editors of *The Letter* and *Common Ground*. Margaret Anderson, of the latter publication, observed, "I have become increasingly aware of the fine job they ["colored women"] are doing in defense industries and civilian defense--often after a disheartening and uphill fight to be allowed to participate. Their courage and spirit and accomplishment in the face of these difficulties compel admiration."[86]

Underscoring its importance, "Wings over Jordan," the Sunday radio program hugely popular in black America, officially launched the week. On that same day, addressing more than two thousand people, Bethune, Harriet Hall of Boston, and Arenia Mallory of Lexington, Mississippi, kicked off the celebration at the Reverend B.C. Robeson's Mother AME Zion Church in New York. In various places women observed We Serve America through "mass meetings, parades, teas, birthday parties, forums, radio parties, and other activities." While NCNW's national affiliates appeared indifferent, at least five metropolitan councils and a few other organizations, implemented the program. Washington and Atlanta went all out. In the latter, NCNW members staged an enormous parade, with fifty army jeeps, twenty-five organizations, and fifty thousand participants. It enabled that council to sell bonds totaling more than $10,000. [87]

Bethune deemed the Washington celebration "magnificent." At the Phyliss Wheatley "Y," she awarded certificates to junior hostesses for USO facilities. Women living in the Langston Residence Hall, a hotel for black female government workers maintained to help relieve the war-related housing crunch, held a Community Sing, conducted by the great Nathaniel R. Dett. The program featured also a speech from Bethune. Residents of Lucy D. Slowe Hall, another government hotel, attracted approximately four hundred people to a grand birthday tea for Bethune, the likes of which she had never seen. Senators, judges, and people from all walks of life came. News reel images of it flashed across the land, thanks to the Office of War Information. Moreover, Slowe Hall women, with their NCNW chair Marguerite Johnson, raised $257.00 of the $630.00 the council garnered during the week. The results of "We Serve America" were gratifying enough for council to sponsor a repeat performance the next summer.[88]

While the "We Serve America" week featured an aggregation of activities, on June 3, 1944, a singular event, blessed by Eleanor Roosevelt, demonstrated minority women's patriotism in a new way. With the cooperation of the New England Shipbuilding Corporation in South Portland, Maine, the 10,500-ton S.S. *Harriet Tubman* was launched under NCNW sponsorship. This was a U.S. merchant marine Liberty Ship built to transport supplies to overseas troops and allies. During the war, eighteen would be named for African Americans.

In commemorating Tubman, the NCNW had assumed responsibility to pay for the construction of her namesake vessel by stimulating the sale of war bonds totaling $2,000,000. The organization would emphasize that in buying bonds, purchasers personally honored the freedom-fighting spirit of Harriet Tubman. At the launching ceremony, the well-heeled council member who had founded and controlled the Apex beauty empire, Sara Spencer Washington, purchased a $10,000 bond. This slim, attractive cosmetics mogul posed with NCNW Secretary Jeanetta Brown, with the bond between them, for the council's Summer 1944 journal, "The S.S. Harriet Tubman Issue."[89]

But the day belonged to American heroine Harriet Tubman (c. 1821-1913), the best known conductor of the Underground Railroad and, in the words of historian Darlene Clark Hine, "the only woman in American military history to plan and execute an armed expedition against enemy forces." Born a slave on Maryland's eastern shore, when about 28, Tubman escaped from bondage. Later, this unschooled woman made at least fifteen trips back into the South to guide to freedom more than two hundred relatives, friends, and strangers. Despite suffering from narcolepsy, she worked so effectively--she never lost a passenger--that Maryland planters offered a $40,000 reward for her capture. At the *Harriet Tubman* launching, the NCNW's Mary Church Terrell observed that the honoree had been an anti-slavery lecturer enthusiastically received all through New England, "an ardent advocate of woman suffrage," a Civil War scout, spy, and nurse, "going from camp to camp, nursing the sick of both races." Terrell alluded also to Tubman's best-known military service, which occurred in 1863. This courageous soul had originated, inspired, and led the raid from Port Royal, South Carolina, inland to the Combahee River, which destroyed plantations supplying Confederate troops. In the post-war era, Tubman continued her good works by raising money for Southern blacks schools and establishing a permanent home in Auburn, New York, for the aged and indigent, of whom many were former slaves.[90]

Along with Tubman's relatives, about a dozen NCNW members witnessed the *Tubman* launching. First VP Vivian Carter Mason presided over the formalities. From Washington, D.C., came Secretary Brown, Historian Terrell, Marion Elliot, Venice Spraggs, and Dorothy Ferebee--but no Mary McLeod Bethune. She was ill, probably with sinusitis, asthma, and exhaustion figuring into her malady. She had been confined to Washington's Freedmen's Hospital for weeks. Yet Bethune must have derived tremendous satisfaction from the launching in South Portland, for it was she who "had coveted this distinction" for Tubman. Most likely, ever since she had presided over the launching of the *Booker T. Washington* Liberty Ship twenty months earlier in Los Angeles, she had worked for one bearing the name of a black woman. Harriet Tubman was her most esteemed sister heroine and the favorite of council women also. They had designated her the patron saint of the *Aframerican Woman's Journal* in its first issue.[91]

Bethune understood that both she and Tubman had been hardy farm laborers and, according to conventional beauty standards, unattractive. But she probably identified with Tubman for their other similarities. They shared unequivocal courage in the face of menacing dangers and obstacles, actions leading to concrete results, perseverence in actions despite frailties of the body, entrance into fields new to women that required remarkable rational thought and self-confidence, a passion for helping others, and a love of freedom uncompromised by class, gender, religion, color, or race. When Bethune wrote for the launching ceremony, "May the spirit of this great heroine [Tubman] permeate our hearts, and fill us with undaunted courage to carry on. . .," she could not have wished for American citizens to possess a more genuine patriotism.[92]

Wartime Pride: Women's Army Corps

World War II brought a new day for American women! They were permitted to serve in all the military services. In May 1942, the army led the way with the organization of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, which fourteen months later became a part of the regular army as the Women's Army Corps. During the war, however, African American women were barred from the 23,000 female arm of the Marine Corps, as well as the Army Air Forces' civilian female adjunct, the Women's Airforce Service Pilots. Only in October 1944, just before the presidential election, did the women's navy and coast guard permit blacks entry: the 100,000 female navy, known as the WAVES, accepted 74; the 13,000 women's coast guard, called the SPARS, tolerated 4. Similarly, the 14,000 Navy Nurse Corps endured 4 as well. Although falling far short of ideal goals, the Army did better. At the end of the war, the Army Nurse Corps totaling 60,000 counted 500 minority women; the Women's Army Corps, or WAC, with a total of 140,000 soldiers had enrolled 6,520 African Americans.[93]

During the global conflagration, race-sensitive liberals advocated the admission of black women into all the military services on a desegregated basis. None were more insistent than members of the NCNW. While having allies among predominantly black organizations, particularly the Alpha Kappa Alpha Non-Partisan Lobby and the NAACP, the nation's leading organizational advocates of women in the military, specifically the American Association of University Women and the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, ignored this issue. When race sisters gained admission to any military service, members of NCNW local chapters extended to them the welcome wagon when stationed in their communities.

The organization as a whole celebrated their achievements through its annual meetings and in the pages of the *Aframerican Woman's Journal.*[94]

Mary McLeod Bethune stood with and above the NCNW in advocating black women in the military and facilitating their careers. While still laboring to improve conditions for black brothers in the armed services, especially was she involved with the WAC, the service recruiting the largest number of African American females. The NCNW President was "the surrogate mother of these black women in the service," writes historian Martha S. Putney, who was a WAC officer during the war and decades later the author of *When the Nation Was in Need: Blacks in the Women's Army Corps during World War II.* But Putney cast Bethune as even more. She was the "Guardian Angel of the Black Wacs of World War II." Openly calling them "my black Wacs," routinely she extended congratulations and praise profusely to any she encountered, in part to boost morale.[95] She knew many personally, including some "Bethune-Cookman girls," and always made time for them and their issues. On June 9, 1943, in response to a greeting from the enlisted Lucy A. Humes, for example, she declared, "You know I am so deeply interested in all we are doing in all these fields [of war service]. There is so much to be done now by the women of the country and the world." Reciprocating, black Wacs regarded Bethune so highly, that contemporary white writer Ruth Danenhower Wilson found that mentioning her friendship with this great woman translated into an "Open Sesame" of information from them for her 1944 book, *Jim Crow Joins Up.*[96] This section discusses Bethune's interest, and by extension that of the NCNW, in the women's army relative to the "First Months," "Segregated Life," and "Army Team Member."

First Months

In 1942, Mary Bethune probably made herself especially acceptable to the War

Department when she refused to demand an anti-segregation clause in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps bill before it became law. While contending for integration, she ignored the requests of close NAACP allies, Chief Counsel Charles Houston and Executive Secretary Walter White, to make such a clause an issue. Presumably she thought that it would defeat the legislation, as the bill's sponsor had vehemently argued. Moreover, when Texan Oveta Culp Hobby was appointed director of the WAAC, based upon her brilliant work in the War Department's Women Interest Section and in behalf of the WAAC bill, the NCNW President did not protest the appointment on the grounds that a Dixie white woman would not treat blacks fairly, as did some black editors and Edgar G. Brown of the independent National Negro Council.[97] Bethune's stance reflected her declaration after Pearl Harbor. "In behalf of the womanhood of the Country and particularly Negro Womanhood," she had proclaimed, "we hereby pledge ourselves [un]reservedly to the service of America, defending its freedom and integrity. . . . The National Council of Negro Women submerges any obstacles that would come between us and an all-out effort of America toward final victory."[98] Consequently, once the WAAC became a fact, as befitting her membership on the Advisory Board of the War Department's Women's Interest Section, she wanted African Americans in it. After conferring with Director Hobby, she announced that "a spirit of justice and fair play" would characterize the WAAC and it was " an opportunity for service of the best women of the race." Also, she declared that "Segregation [within it] was another battle that had to be fought and won."[99]

Given her sense that she and the NCNW had "to stand shoulder to shoulder with all other women of the country in bearing our part of the responsibility for winning the war," Bethune, 66, wanted a more formalized connection to the Women's Corps. She was open to an assistant directorship. This orbited out of reach, however, when the army quickly announced that all would-be officers had to join the corps and weather officer-training.[100] Nonetheless, Uncle Sam had a job for Bethune. On May 14, 1942, when Congress passed the WAAC legislation, the War Department had anticipated that segregation would repel the best-qualified black women from signing up. To counteract that, it determined on an intensive recruiting campaign. "An eminently qualified person, preferably a Negro recruiter," an internal memorandum stated, "will be sent out to colored colleges in order to secure the proper class of applicants."[101] There existed no more "eminently qualified person" than the National Council President. Consequently, on June 27, 1942, the War Department borrowed her from the National Youth Administration for a minimum of four or five days to serve as a Special Assistant to the Secretary of War for selecting WAAC officer-candidates.[102]

Bethune welcomed the challenge. She touted the WAAC among black women. When local army recruiters in Charlotte, Dallas, Pittsburgh, and other places refused black women application blanks, in addition to contacting WAAC headquarters, women sometimes appealed to Bethune. She emphasized to all the benefits of entering the army auxiliary, but even more the patriotism exemplified by joining-up. "We cannot stand on the outside when women of every nation and country where freedom is at stake are standing up and reaching out to share in the struggle," she explained. For the world is ours as much as it is any man's who ever walked the land."[103] With army assistance, this well-known recruiter did a good job in selecting "women of character, leadership, and cooperative attitude," who met the exacting criteria for officer-candidates. Some she personally sought out and persuaded to become Waacs. All whom Bethune selected had gone to college and many had graduated.

On July 20, 1942, as a special representative of the War Department, Bethune was waiting to greet WAAC recruits when they began basic training at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. As she inspected the post, like a preacher after church, she had a cheerful hello for everyone in sight. Noel Campbell Mitchell later remembered that Bethune told blacks there, that the War Department "did not want us in the first place, so we had to set an example.[104] When the officer candidates were assembled, Bethune went on the record as follows.

> I bring you the greetings of the War Department. I bring you the greetings of more than eight hundred thousand members of the National Council of Negro Women. You are at this moment the representatives of fourteen million Negroes in America. Here at Fort Des Moines we have democracy in action. We are asking for equal participation. We are not going to be agitators. We are real Americans, and as Americans we must give our all to protect America. I know you are going to arise above any criticism that could possibly be made against you. I have an abiding faith in you. My blessings upon you.

This being the case, six weeks later, in spirit though not body, Bethune hovered over the 36 out of 39 ebony women, who with 400 classmates received commissions as WAAC officers.[105]

Segregated Life

Blatant racial segregation at Fort Des Moines had presented African American women with mountains other Waacs had not climbed. To reinforce the War Department's policy of segregation, the army and Director Hobby interpreted Bethune's remarks at Fort Des Moines as approval--for the situation was "democracy in action"--and that blacks were not to complain. But these women did complain. Others did likewise. John A. Lapp of Chicago took the matter to Eleanor Roosevelt, noting, "While bad enough for any one, such treatment seems especially shabby when accorded these well educated and highly trained Negro women."[106] When the First

Lady asked Bethune about discrimination at the WAAC Training Facility, the black leader, although understanding the situation well, used the occasion to solicit the knowledgeable Charles P. Howard of the Howard News Syndicate to conduct an inquiry. With civilian searching parties from the YMCA, the Boston Urban League, the Julius Rosenwald Fund, the NAACP, and other agencies at Fort Des Moines, the Howard probe was one of many.[107] Others would follow, including a War Department inquiry instigated by Bethune upon receiving a telegram charging more discrimination from ten African Americans at Des Moines. Bethune acted on complaints, for she advised uniformed women to solicit help from her, the council, and other external organizations, rather than fight segregation themselves.[108]

Journalist Charles Howard found that John Lapp's charges of discrimination to Eleanor Roosevelt were true. African Americans were housed together in a building at the east end of WAAC barracks and were required to eat together at special tables in the southeast corner of the dinning room. They could use the USO (United Service Organizations) center and swimming pool only under discriminatory rules. The could not use the officers' club at all. All black officer candidates were assigned to one platoon. The officer training staff was lily-white. In defense, Post Commander Don C. Faith, announced, "That was army policy." In truth, although an auxiliary, the Women's Corps enjoyed no liberty to act independently of army apartheid regulations.[109]

Unfortunately, by mid autumn, racial separatism in WAAC training escalated. Bethune learned that it was justified in her name and that of Lieutenant Harriet West, then the Personnel officer for black Waacs--having graduated in the first officer class in August. Previously, West had been her aide in the National Youth Administration. Refuting the heresy, Bethune submitted a statement to the NAACP's Walter White, who revealed its contents to African Americans at the WAAC post. "I have read with great alarm your findings on the status of segregation being practiced in the training of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps at Fort Des Moines," she wrote. "Specifically, I am even more alarmed because of information coming to you and to Negro members of the WAAC indicating that I have given my approval to this segregated plan of operation. I have never at any time approved segregation at Fort Des Moines."[110]

Once the assertion of blacks advocating segregation was laid to rest, things improved. By December 1942, the NAACP announced that "the segregation policy at Fort Des Moines is slackening." The army was finding it easier to mostly integrate the relatively few blacks, rather than uniformly insisting on segregation. The next year, Ana Aikens, an enlisted African American who experienced basic training at Des Moines, thought that "conditions on the post were pretty fair." She noted later, "We only had segregated service clubs." She could have added that black officers had no service club.[111] Not even Bethune could facilitate ebony officers' using the only officers club on base. Before the war ended, on one of her several individual inspection tours of military facilities, she found that one of her own, WAC officer Dovey Mae Johnson [Roundtree], could escort her everywhere at Fort Des Moines, except into the officers' club. To everyone's surprise, the Post Commander threw a farewell dinner for Bethune in this facility. Nevertheless, it remained taboo to black officers.[112]

Segregation not only governed aspects of life at Fort Des Moines but often Waacs' assignments in the field. On the grounds that they had skills for little else, too frequently some black Waacs found themselves sweeping and mopping hospital floors. During the summer of '43 at Camp Breckinridge, Kentucky, for example, six of them declined to do so. While the War

Department conceded that these women were improperly assigned, it resolved the issue by permitting them to resign. This occurred at a time when anybody could leave the Corps because of its transition from auxiliary to regular army.[113]

About eighteen months later at Lovell Army General Hospital at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, another incident of enlisted African Americans refusing to do floors occurred. For this, on March 20, 1945, the army court-martialed them, with a sentence of hard labor for a year. News of it swept through the country. Like most black Wacs at the hospital, the white powers had classified these four women as orderlies, while giving few white Wacs that designation. Hospital Commandant Colonel Walter H. Crandall had told them that he wanted no black Wacs in the hospital's motor pool or assisting as medical technicians.

Bethune had repeatedly attempted to see Colonel Hobby about the situation, but she had been unavailable. As usual, however, she got through to Eleanor Roosevelt. Subsequently, President Roosevelt summoned Hobby to the White House. Also, Bethune contacted Secretary of War Henry Stimson noting, "The issues involved are so serious and the implications so broad that we beseech you to make your own personal investigation." As three New York Congressmen called for an inquiry, the NCNW hired two lawyers to investigate the case. On April 3, 1945, sanity prevailed. The army voided the sentences on a technicality and restored the four women to active duty.[114]

For black Wacs, segregation not only held sway in training and assignments but usually off-base too. The government's deliberate placement of numerous military posts in the South to enhance its dragging economy compounded difficulties because the region was determined to deny all African Americans--in uniform or not--free use of public accommodations, so as to reinforce their subordinate status to whites. Among those that Southern-style racism hit hardest were two black Wacs in Elizabethtown, Kentucky. A pair of policemen brutally beat them for allegedly violating segregation laws and then drew them in jail. Moreover, the army initiated court martial proceedings for the same reason. The council appealed to Secretary of War Stimson and Kentucky Governor Simeon Willis to intervene. Also, it supported the NAACP in their defense. Although the city released the Wacs from jail and the army halted court martial proceedings, they never received justice.[115]

While Bethune and the NCNW lived with the reality of segregation outside the military, at times they bowed to its inevitability within. Even so, they insisted on a modicum of fairness, as when the army ordered the dissolution of the black band at Des Moines, on the grounds that it was an unauthorized "excess," while maintaining the prohibition of blacks in the white band. Band director Lieutenant Thelma B. Brown informed Bethune about this situation, which had caused enlisted band members to lose their ratings. Bethune sounded the alarm, making inquiries and then writing directly to Colonel Hobby on August 14, 1944. Many African Americans complained to the War Department. Under pressure, it ordered the band's reactivation, noting that the base commander favored it for morale purposes.[116]

Just as with the band incident, on the grounds of fairness African Americans wanted sister Wacs to have the opportunity for overseas duty. The first white Wacs began to serve on foreign soil in January 1943. Bethune and other powerful voices agitated for African American Wacs to follow. In the late summer of '44, Bethune reiterated to Colonel Oveta Hobby "that colored Wacs be allowed to serve overseas." In the WAC official history, author Mattie E. Treadwell asserts, "Pressure of Negro groups finally forced the War Department to direct the European [T]heater [of

War] to accept Negro Wacs." Consequently, the 6888th Central Postal Battalion came into being, commanded by one of the Corps first officers, Major Charity Adams. While one woman suggested that the army should have sent the NAACP overseas instead, generally members of the battalion welcomed going to Europe to route the mail.[117] Along with Colonel Hobby, Bethune had anticipated seeing the troops off from Camp Shanks, New York, in early February, 1945. Instead, she sent a telegram.

> It was my hope to meet you and confer with you and give my blessings before your departure. It is now too late. We are depending upon you. We have much at stake. You represent 15 million of us. Your success in this courageous service is ours. Think well. Realize your individual responsibility. Carve a nitch for those who will follow you. God Bless you.
> Mary McLeod Bethune   National Council of Negro Women

A year later, when the bulk of the battalion returned to the states from England and France, a proud Bethune stood welcoming them home with Hobby's successor Colonel Westray B. Boyce in New York.[118]

Both at the time and later, knowledgeable individuals concurred that Bethune's advocacy of foreign duty for uniformed black women proved crucial. Historian Martha Putney writes, "Bethune indeed played a central role in the deployment of black Wacs overseas." Margaret Barnes Jones, public relations officer of the 6888th, believed this as well. Interestingly, she was the daughter of Margaret E. Barnes, reputedly a friend of Bethune's and the Ohio State President in the National Association of Colored Women, who in 1937 published that "the organization of the national council [NCNW] was untimely due to the financial condition of the national [National Association of Colored Women]" and it set-off "an uproaring flame that threatened to consume our very spirit."[119] Without her National Council, however, it's unlikely that Bethune could have as effectively advanced the career of Barnes' daughter and thousands like her.

Although confronting segregation at most turns, Mary McLeod Bethune's interest in the women's army extended beyond a role tailored-made for a president of ebony women. When in the summer of '42 it became known that the Corps would require a second training facility, she viewed this army through the eyes of a hometown partisan. The fact that beautiful Daytona Beach, Florida, was racially a "Closed Society," as historian Robert E. Snyder emphasizes, obviously was not Bethune's priority, for she maneuvered to have the WAAC Center in that city. She telephoned Eleanor Roosevelt, who, agreeing with her thinking, made it happen. Even with drawbacks, Daytona alone sought to host WAAC training. Rather than displace occupants of military posts, the army high command accepted the city's proposal. It activated the center on October 10, 1942, and began receiving trainees in January 1943. As a contemporary local columnist observed, "Had it not been for the coming of the Waacs, Daytona Beach would. . . have been a ghost town."[120]

But these Waacs, numbering at one time more than 14,000 were all white. Little wonder that one knowledgeable commentator wrote that some of Bethune's war-time work was "unrecorded because of its confidential nature." Certainly the press made no explicit links between Bethune and the Second WAAC Training Center. Yet in the early 1950's when Leroy Harlow moved to Daytona as its new city manager, he learned almost immediately an open secret: Mary McLeod Bethune had brought that center to town. Uncle Sam's training dollars for thousands of soldiers had showered the area with new vitality. Although the center was completely closed by March 1944, its cantonment facilities became the Welsh Convalescent Center, a roller rink, a center for the blind, and the Daytona Beach Community College.[121]

In interceding for a Daytona WAAC Training Center, several considerations must have crossed Bethune's mind. As the president of a struggling college dependent in part on the charity of the area's tourists and residents, here was an opportunity to approach the city fathers, not as a beggar, but as a municipal benefactress. Since the facility was going to land somewhere, why not where it would it would benefit friends and those who might become so? She must have reasoned also that the white only center would not injure black women because they could receive identical training at Des Moines. Perhaps more fundamental was Bethune's inclination to function as a leader in the broader society, thus transcending the "Negro Box" when an opening permitted. "She had to restrain herself all the time," friend James C. Evans remarked, "so as not to get out of bounds."[122]

Army Team Member

Despite continuously pushing non-discriminatory measures, Mary McLeod Bethune did so within bounds, using the nuanced language of diplomacy. If she knew anything, it was getting along with people. She used her White House contacts well also. Additionally, she was a distinguished college founder-president responsible for a significant component of a government program, as well as chief of a credible national female organization. In sum, Dr. Bethune stood out as the nation's most visible civic woman of color. Unsurprisingly, therefore, in 1941 after applying pressure as noted earlier, she sat on the War Department's Women's Interest Section Advisory Council, consisting of more than thirty organizations. With the formation of the National Civilian Advisory Committee about three years later, she became a part of that too--the only African American, out of about twenty-five women. Seemingly in the former group, membership consisted of organizations, meaning that the president of a member-organization determined its representative, who could change; in the latter, membership consisted of prestigious individuals selected by the War Department. WAC Chief Oveta Hobby called the Civilian Advisory, "General [George] Marshall's Committee" because the Army Chief of Staff reputedly selected all twenty-three members.[123] Like the Advisory Council of the Women's Interest Section, it focused on the Women's Army Corps. The War Department kept members of both committees informed of new developments though conferences, written communications, and observations at military facilities. It usually gave their questions, commentaries, and requests consideration. The committees' endorsement of the WAC enhanced its standing both locally and nationally.

Mary Bethune delighted in serving on the Women's Interest Section Committee and the National Civilian Advisory Committee. Through them, she became acquainted with a greater cross-section of mainstream America's prominent civic-minded women; conversely, more came to know her and her causes. As in the case of Mrs. Mary Pillsbury Lord of New York City, who chaired women's activities for the National War Fund, sometimes this translated into some attending gatherings of the National Council of Negro Women and otherwise taking an interest in it. Whether this occurred or not, Bethune was committed to giving her best to army committee work, including a Civilian Advisory sub-unit, the Committee on Religious and Morale Services.[124] Her involvement may be glimpsed in the solicited recommendations the NCNW made to the WAC regarding black recruitment and her report of a military hospital tour.

In August 1943, the WAC requested from the NCNW recruitment advice because of a downward recruiting spiral stemming from vicious rumors of sexual permissiveness in the Corps, attrition due to conversion from auxiliary to regular army, and the hesitancy of black women to subject themselves to racist military policies and discipline. Bethune had known of the nonchalance among blacks, especially since a year before the unfounded rumors and conversion, the War Department's Truman Gibson had apprized her of a "decided lack of interest on the part of Negro girls" in the WAAC and had pleaded, "stimulate your women's organizations to urge Negroes to join."[125]

Bethune and the council prefaced their report to Colonel Oveta Hobby and her Executive Officer Colonel Thomas B. Cation by observing, "It was difficult to make recommendations for recruiting because of segregation. Full integration is the goal we seek." Even so, NCNW offered ten pieces of advice. One was irrelevant because it violated the policy of no Wacs replacing civilians. Two applied equally to enlisted women and officers. The council weighed in against an all-black regiment at Fort Des Moines that the War Department had contemplated. Also, it favored overseas duty for black women. It learned that the idea of an all-black regiment had been discarded and that overseas duty was under consideration.

The NCNW's seven other recommendations targeted black officers. Like Bethune's council's work in general and her National Youth Administration work, the emphasis was on leadership. Amid the staggering strength of armed services apartheid, she concentrated on the officer cadre, a segment of the military in which the Roosevelt Administration acted to ameliorate segregation. The council advocated that black officers experience basic training in a relatively hospitable locale and have access to all specialized training opportunities available to others. It recommended more black officers to recruit, to counsel, and to build morale relative to other blacks. On the other hand, it advised that some officers to be given opportunities to classify jobs, to operate programs, both on post and in Washington, and to do other work not necessarily targeting race sisters.[126]

The WAC accepted the council's recommendations in modified form. Implementation produced improved morale and tangible benefits. It failed however, to yield the results anticipated: significantly augmented numbers of African American Wacs. In the year following the recommendations, the net gain in black enrolles was about 750; for whites, about 34,000. Over that year, the black contingent of the WAC steadily dropped and the ratio of black officers to black enlisted women was about half the white rate. Moreover, Colonel Hobby shied away from Bethune after '43, on the grounds of her unpredictability.[127]

Even though hugely under-represented in the Women's Army, ebony women still visibly served, a fact that Bethune relished. During July 16-24, 1945, after victory in Europe but before Japanese surrender, a hospital tour afforded her one of many opportunities to observe their work, housing, and adequacy of training. As a member of the National Civilian Advisory Committee, she toured six hospitals engaged in the physical and mental rehabilitation of soldiers from the battle-fronts. They were located in Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Her group, one of five traveling through different geographical areas, consisted of five other women. They prominently identified with the American Red Cross, National War Fund, National Citizenship Education Program, a University Psychiatry Program, and the WAC.

Black women, either as nurses or Wacs, were engaged in much-needed services in several hospitals visited. At Valley Forge General Hospital in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, Mary Bethune observed Wacs assisting in making plaster masks to be used in planning soldiers' future surgery. This black female icon noted that the Halloran General Hospital, on Staten Island, employed seventy-five black Wacs and England General Hospital in Atlantic City, a hundred. All worked in an integrated setting. Obviously she took pleasure reporting that Lieutenant Ruth Wallace served on the Dietitian's staff at Halloran. No African American nurses or Wacs, however, worked at Cushing Hospital in Framingham, Massachusetts; Rhoads Hospital in Utica, New York; and Mason Hospital on Long Island, New York.

Wounded black soldiers from all over the country, some lacking an eye or a limb or two and sometimes worse, were glad to see the legendary Bethune. She was eager to greet all, but especially those sheltered at Atlantic City's "palatial cultural setting," the Dennis Hotel, the abode of her group for two nights. She remembered when she and race leaders Walter White and Channing Tobias had sat for thirty minutes with President Roosevelt to help disabuse him of the contemplated separate recuperating facilities for blacks and whites. "We told him," she recalled, "that it could be done without friction with the proper staff to promote it." At the Dennis Hotel, Bethune discovered a fulfilled-prophecy, for there had been "not a single sign of friction." She visualized such integration throughout the land "if men at the top," she wrote, "will only have courage to see it through."

Civilian adviser Bethune characterized the entire tour as "most informing, inspiring, and satisfactory." The satisfaction would have been greater had all hospitals hired black nurses or Wacs. Moreover, she declared, "I came away with a great question mark in my mind as to why" none of the hospitals employed an African American physician. "We [who are of African descent] want to help others as others are helping us," she contended. "We are more and more wanting to work with others than to have other work for us." Bethune worked with the WAC through the National Civilian Advisory Committee until it disbanded in the summer of 1948. About that time, the WAC, too, was dislodged, for women soldiers faced integration into the regular army.[128]

As the Allies gained ascendency in World War II, at home the National Council of Negro Women increasingly progressed towards achieving its charter objectives. It was federating national black women's organizations, serving as a clearinghouse of information, promoting the civic participation of black women in mainstream America, and sponsoring projects benefitting African Americans. The initial disbelief of some women about the council's ability to make a difference "has been erased completely, since the activity of the Council has found its way into almost every section of the country," observed the women's editor at the *Pittsburgh Courier* in 1942. "We needed the Council and it has proved a [boom] of service second to no other national Negro women's organization."[129] Many informed people agreed.

Notes

1. Quoted from NCNW Proceedings of Annual Meeting, November 26, 1938, 65, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 1, Folder 4, Mary McLeod Bethune Council House, National Historic Site, National Park Service.

2. Regarding the number of dues-paying national affiliates: Annual Financial Reports from Treasurer Addie Dickerson on November 27, 1937, November 25, 1938, and November 4, 1939 (showing payments in '38), NCNW Papers, Series 11, Box 4, list the Daughters of the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World, Iota Phi Lambda Sorority, National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses, and Phi Delta Kappa Sorority. Twenty NCNW national affiliates are printed on stationary in Bethune to Dr. Charles Johnson, August 23, 1943, Mary McLeod Bethune Papers, Fisk University; NCNW member Venice T. Spraggs's column, *Chicago Defender*, October 30, 1943, Tuskegee Institute Newspaper Clippings File, Tuskegee University, noted that at the '43 annual meeting the National Jeanes Association joined the council.

Regarding the number of metropolitan councils: The first New York chapter claimed that it was organized in 1938 in Ruth Caston Mueller, ed., *Women United: Souvenir Year Book* (Washington, D.C: National Council of Negro Women, 1951); the first mention in a NCNW annual meeting of a local council having organized was in the NCNW Minutes, November 4, 1939, 4, National Council of Negro Women Vertical File, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York City; Arabella Denniston to Bethune, May 8, 1943, NCNW Papers (Series 5, Box 10, Folder 172) lists new councils in Chicago, St. Louis, and Richmond; the NCNW Minutes, October 15-17, 1942, 8, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 1, Folder 15, lists new councils in Atlanta and Kansas

City; Bethune in her NCNW Annual Report, October 15, 1943, Mary McLeod Bethune Vertical File, Schomburg, states that during 1942-43, councils developed in Pittsburgh, New Jersey and Washington.

While Bethune stated in her 1941 NCNW Annual Report, Mary McLeod Bethune Papers, Mary McLeod Bethune Foundation (BF), Bethune Cookman College, that eight local councils existed, corroborating evidence has not been found.

3. NCNW Proceedings, November 26, 1938, 7-12.

4. Jeanetta Welch Brown, NCNW Annual Report of the Executive Secretary, October 15, 1943, NCNW Vertical File, Schomburg.

5. *Chicago Defender*, November 11, 1939, 17; *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 25, 1941, 10; Bethune's opinion recounted in "Declares There Is No Place for Discrimination," *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 1, 1941, 9.

6. *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 25, 1941, 10.

7. "The National Council of Negro Women, " *Chicago Defender*, October 24, 1942, Tuskegee Newspaper Clippings.

8. *Aframerican Woman's Journal*, Conference Issue 1941, 12.

9. Summaries of the NCNW annual meeting, (including "Overview," "Concerns Expressly Voiced" and "Dinner Session"), 1938-1943, are based primarily on NCNW minutes and/or proceedings, 1938-1942, and accounts in periodicals of the meeting 1938-1943, in the *Aframerican Woman's Journal*, *Afro-American* [Baltimore], *Chicago Defender*, *New York Age*, *New York Amsterdam News*, *Pittsburgh Courier*, and *Washington Afro-American;* also, various articles in the Tuskegee Newspaper Clippings, and typed or printed NCNW programs of annual meetings, 1939 through 1943.

10. "What The Leaders' Say!" *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 25, 1941, 9.

11. NCNW Proceedings, November 26, 1938, 1.

12. Bethune to "Council Member," June 17, 1940, NCNW Papers, Series 4, Box 1, and Folder 12.

13. *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 24, 1942, 9.

14. Bethune to Will Alexander, October 26, 1943, NCNW Papers, Series 5, Box 1, Folder 2; *Chicago Defender*, October 30, 1943, Tuskegee Newspaper Clippings; Bethune to Charles Johnson, August 23, 1943, Bethune Papers, Fisk University.

15. Quote from *Washington Afro-American*, October 9, 1943, 10; flyer announcing the Interracial Work Shop and "Monster Mass Meeting," NCNW Vertical File, Schomburg.

16. Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro* (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, Inc., 1925), 5-16.

17. Elaine M. Smith, "International Council of Women of the Darker Races," in *Organizing Black America: An Encyclopedia of African American Associations*, ed. Nina Mjagkij, (New York: Garland Publishing, 2001), 278-281; Quote from "Findings of the National Council of Negro Women in Meeting, Thursday, October 25, 1940," Section V, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 1, Folder 8.

18. NCNW Proceedings, November 26, 1938, 23.

19. Telegram attached to NCNW Minutes, November 26,1938, Series 2, Box 1, Folder 4.

20. Quote from *New York Age*, December 3, 1938, 4; Quote from NCNW Minutes, October 25-26, 1940, 9, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 1, Folder 7.

21. *New York Age*, December 3, 1938, 4.

22. *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 8, 1941, 4; Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, "African Americans and World War II: A Pictorial Essay," *Negro History Bulletin* 51-57 (December 1993) 8.

23. *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 24, 1942, 11.

24. *New York Age*, December 3, 1938, 4.

25. *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 11, 1939, 8.

26. *New York Amsterdam News*, November 11, 1939, 13.

27. *Aframerican Woman's Journal*, Conference Issue 1941, 6.

28. Bethune to E.R., September 7, 1940, and Secretary to Mrs. Roosevelt to Bethune, September 13, 1940, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York; E.R., "My Day" [newspaper column], *World Telegram* [New York], October 18, 1941, and "700 Women Attend White House Tea," *Globe and Independent* [Nashville, Tennessee], October 3, 1941, Tuskegee Newspaper Clippings.

29. Dorothy I. Height Interview, *The Black Women Oral History Project*, Volume 5, ed. Ruth Edmonds Hills (Westport, CT: Meckler, 1991), 74.

30. *Afro-American* [Baltimore], October 25, 1941, 16; *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 25, 1941, 10.

31. Quote from unedited NCNW Minutes, October 25, 1940, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 1, Folder 7.

32. Quote from *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 25, 1941, 10.

33. NCNW Proceedings, November 26,1938, 1-2.

34. NCNW Minutes, October 25, 1940, 2-4.

35. Bethune, NCNW Annual Report, October 15, 1943, 8, Bethune Vertical File, Schomburg.

36. Hilliard, *Chicago Bee*, August 24, 1941, Tuskegee Newspaper Clippings; *Courier*, October 24, 1942, 9-10.

37. *Defender*, October 30, 1943, Tuskegee Newspaper Clippings.

38. Julia Jones, *Courier*, October 30, 1943, 11, and November 1, 1941, 9.

39. Quotes appear in Chapter 1 under "Introduction" and "Objectives."

40. Susan M. Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940's* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), 55.

41. *New York Times*, October 15, 1941, 16.

42. *Washington Post*, October 14, 1941, 15.

43. *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 11, 1941, 8, and October 25, 1941, 1, source of quote.

44. *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 8, 1941, 1; Bethune's Activities in the War Effort, undated, BF; Dorothy I. Height, "The National Council of Negro Women in the War-Program,"[1942], BF.

45. Bethune, NCNW Annual Report, October 16, 1941, BF.

46. "Mary Bethune Takes 800,000 Members into the National Council of Women, *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 1, 1941, 8.

47. Ibid., source of quotes; Member organizations of the U.S. National Council

participating in the 1943 meeting are listed in Minutes of the Biennial Meeting, October 28-29, 1943; For Bethune's participation in the U.S. council meeting in 1925 see *New York Age*, November 14, 1925, Tuskegee Newspaper Clippings; for her participation in the 1927, see *Year Book and Directory of the National Council of Women of the United States, Inc.*, (New York, 1928), 25, 32, 54, 59, 120.

48. Lucy R. Milligan to Bethune, October 9, 1942 and Bethune to Milligan, October 15, 1942, NCNW Papers, Series 5, Box 24, Folder 366.

49. Bethune to Mrs. Harold V. Milligan, March 22, 1943, BF; Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World*; (Washington: Ransdell, 1940), 370, states that the segregation at the International Council Meeting was the second "most serious friction" between white and black club women. I interpret this as admitting the denial of an office to a black woman in '33 was the cause of greater friction, given how exercised some women became. Nannie Helen Burroughs to Mary F. Waring, January 25, 1934, with enclosure, Nannie Helen Burroughs Papers, Library of Congress, explains that National Association President Sallie Stewart "took it upon herself to get the National Federation [NACW] off the official roster of the Council [of Women of the United States];" the U.S. Council Stationary shows Jennie B. Moton Fourth V.P. in 1940 and its minutes carry Ada DeMent as a Fourth V.P. in 1942, NCNW Papers.

50. Bethune to Milligan, October 20, 1943, NCNW Papers, Series 5, Box 24, Folder 366.

51. Minutes, U.S. National Council of Women, October 28-29, 1943, Charlotte Payne to Bethune, November 3, 1943, Bethune to Payne, November 8, 1943; Lillian H. Alexander [one of five NCNW delegates], Report of the U.S. Council Biennial Meeting, October 29, 1943.

52. Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy A Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 160-173.

53. Bethune quoted from Minutes of the National Association of Colored Women, Inc., on July 27, 1941, 76; Bettye Collier-Thomas, *The National Council of Negro Women, 1935-1980* (Washington, D.C., 1981), 1. For an intimate look at Bethune's involvement in NACW affairs, see, for example, Bethune to Cecelia Smith, November 12, 1943, BF, Part 2, Reel 13; Bethune to Ada Belle DeMent, April 24, 1943, and DeMent to "Executive Board Member [NACW]," April 29, 1945, BF.

54. Executive Secretary's Report, 1940-1941, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 1, Folder 7; NCNW organizations appear in the Pittsburgh Courier, October 25, 1941, 8; also, see Note 2 of this chapter. Bethune declared in her 1941 NCNW Annual Report that the council had eighteen national affiliates and eight local chapters. NCNW financial records do not support these assertions, nor can the statements be otherwise documented. It is likely that eighteen organizations had expressed an interest in joining the NCNW and women in eight cities had expressed an interest in forming an NCNW chapter.

55. Memberships of NCNW's organizational affiliates are reported in the minutes of the executive board, October 24, 1940, NCNW Papers, Series 3, Box 1, Folder 1.

56. "Mary Bethune Takes 800,000 Members into the National Council of Women, *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 1, 1941, 8; "What the Leaders Say!" *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 25, 1941, 9.

57. Telegram, Bethune to Howard Bearden and Family, September 17, 1943, Bessye Bearden Papers, Schomburg.

58. *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 23, 1943, 6; NCNW Program of Annual Workshop, October 1944, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 2, Folder 22.

59. Bethune quoted from the *Afro-American* [Baltimore], October 25, 1941, 16.

60. Dorothy Height Interview, *Oral History Project*, Vol. 5, 69, reveals that sometimes women said unkind things about Bethune.

61. *Aframerican Woman's Journal* (Summer, 1944), 19-21.

62. The tenures of the executive secretaries are based primarily on NCNW minutes of annual meetings, 1938-1942; Dorothy Height Interview, *Oral History Project*, Vol 5, 73.

63. *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 24, 1943, 10.

64. Denniston to Bethune, September 19, 1940, BF.

65. Norman to Bethune, July 1, 1941, Bethune to Norman, July 3, 1941, Bethune to Thurman, July 3, 1941, Norman to Vivian C. Mason, July 9, 1941, NCNW Papers, Series 4, Box 1, Folder 21; Bethune, NCNW Annual Report, 1941, BF; NCNW Minutes, October 16-18, 1941;

In the Dorothy Height Interview, *Oral History Project*, 69, Height reports that Bethune asked her to serve as executive secretary in Chicago, but the 1941 Conference Minutes, page 4, and subsequent documents show that Height was elected in Washington. Height states, "The next year, when I went to work in Washington, Mrs. Bethune then had me to serve as the registrar. . . The following year she had the meeting in Chicago." After she moved to Washington, Height's first NCNW convention was in 1940; the next year, the convention was in Washington again. It moved to Chicago in '42. "Farewell Reception Given for Miss Dorothy Height," *Washington Afro-American*, October 14, 1944, 14, reports that Height had been the "Y" secretary in D.C. for five years.

66. NCNW Proceedings, November 26,1938, 37.

67. Brown and Bethune quoted in Joyce Ann Hanson, "The Ties that Bind: Mary McLeod Bethune and the Political Mobilization of Women," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1997), 176-177.

68. Brown, NCNW Annual Report, October 15, 1943; NCNW Proceedings, November 26, 1938, 38. Carita V. Roane to Bethune, October 10, 1940, NCNW Papers, Series 4, Box 1, Folder 12.

69. Florence Norman to Marguerite [Margaret] Bowen, July 3, 1941, NCNW Papers, Series 4, Box 1, Folder 21; Bethune to Florence K. Norman, September 3, 1941, Series 4, Box 2, Folder 24.

70. Bethune, NCNW Annual Report, October 16, 1941, BF; Bethune to Bessye Bearden, November 14, 1942, NCNW Papers, Series 11, Box 4.

71. Eleanor Roosevelt to Bethune, April 17, 1943, BF; Bethune to Dr. Charles Johnson, April 24, 1943, Bethune Papers, Fisk University; Will W. Alexander to Bethune, November 12, 1943, NCNW Papers, Series 5, Box 1, Folder 2; Dorothy A. Elvidge to Bethune, January 5, 1944, NCNW Papers, Series 5, Box 10, Folder 187.

72. Brown, NCNW Annual Report, October 15, 1943.

73. Bethune, Letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in *Mary McLeod Bethune: Building a Better World*, ed. Audrey Thomas McCluskey and Elaine M. Smith, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 173-174.

74. Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: William Morrow, 1984), 236-237; Minutes, Biennial Convention of the National Association of Colored Women, July 26-August 1, 1941, 29, states that the Committee on Resolutions recommended "Appreciation for Phillip Randolph, Water White, Mesdames Bethune and Moton for their assistance toward bringing about the proclamation issued by the President of the U.S.A. prohibiting discrimination of Negroes in Defense Industries." The most likely interpretation of this statement is that both Bethune and Moton were planning to have their members march on Washington with other blacks, had not Randolph and White reached an accommodation with FDR resulting in Executive Order 8801.

75. Neil A. Wynn, *The Afro-American and the Second World War* (New York: Homes and Meier, 1975,) 42-48.

76. Bethune, "Negro Women Facing Tomorrow," Minutes, Biennial Convention of the National Association of Colored Women, July 26-August 1, 1941, 72-77.

77. Robert L. Daniel, *American Women in the 20th Century: The Festival of Life* (San

Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987), 125-127; Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 237-238.

78. *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 10, 1943, 1; John A. Davis to Bethune, January 26, 1944, NCNW Papers, Series 5, Box 10, Folder 174; Wynn, *Afro-American and the Second World War*, 48-54.

79. *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 18, 1943, 10; Brown, NCNW Annual Report, October 15, 1943.

80. *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 7, 1943, 11; Telefact [Monthly Newsletter of the NCNW], August 1943; Brown, NCNW Annual Report, October 15, 1943.

81. Wynn, *Afro-American and the Second World War*, 69-72.

82. Jeanetta Welch Brown, "We Serve America" statement, July 3, 1943, *Aframerican Woman's Journal*, Summer 1943; *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 6, 1943, 11 (source of quote); *Washington Afro-American*, July 10, 1943, 11.

83. Bethune, *Afro-American* [Baltimore], July 3, 1943, 16.

84. Bethune, "Certain Unalienable Rights," *Bethune*, ed. McCluskey and Smith, 20-27.

85. Bethune, NCNW Annual Report, October 15, 1943; Brown, NCNW Annual Report, October 15, 1943.

86. *Aframerican Woman's Journal*, "'The Negro Woman Serves America' Issue," (Summer 1943), Cover; Brown, NCNW Annual Report, October 15, 1943; Anderson quoted from the *Afro-American* [Baltimore], July 3, 1943, 16.

87. Brown, NCNW Annual Report, October 15, 1943; *Afro-American* [Baltimore], July 17, 1943, 16.

88. Bethune to Bessie Bearden, July 15, 1943, Bearden Papers, Schomburg; Brown, NCNW Annual Report, October 15, 1943; Telefact, August, 1943; *Aframerican Woman's Journal*, (Summer 1944), 6.

89. *Aframerican Woman's Journal*, (Summer 1944), is devoted to the launching of the *Harriet Tubman*: the front cover shows the huge ship; outside back cover, Washington and Brown with the text titled "Your Tribute to Harriet Tubman;" other journal features are "An American Heroine," 2; "Message From Eleanor Roosevelt," 3; "Message From Mary McLeod Bethune," 3; "The Launching," 3; "The 'Launching For Freedom' Program," 3; "Excerpts From Address by Mary Church Terrell," 4; "Our Challenge, by Dorothy Boulding Ferebee," 4. Casper LeRoy Jordan, "Sarah (Sara) Spencer Washington," in *Notable Black American Women*, ed. Jessie Carney Smith,

(Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1992), 1224-1225.

90. Hine, "Harriet Tubman," in *Black Women in America*, Vol. II, ed. Darlene Clark Hine, et al., (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, 1993), 1176-1180; Terrell, "Excerpts from an Address."

91. *Aframerican Woman's Journal*, (Summer 1944), 3, 5; Bethune to D.E. Williams, August 25, 1944, BF; Bethune, "My Last Will and Testament," *Bethune: Building a Better World*, McCluskey and Smith, 60, named Tubman first in recounting great black woman of the past.

92. Bethune, "Message From Mary McLeod Bethune," *Aframerican Woman's Journal*, (Summer 1944), 3.

93. Jesse J. Johnson, ed., *Black Women in the Armed Forces*, 1942-1974 (Hampton, Virginia: by the Author, 1974), 33, 41, 63; Susan M. Hartmann, "Women in the Military," in *Clio Was a Woman: Studies in the History of American Women*, ed. Mabel E. Deutrich and Virginia C. Purdy (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1980), 203. The *only* estimate seemingly available for the total number of black women who served in the WAC appeared in advertising of the "Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.," Dept. 560, Washington, DC 20042-0560.

94. Susan M. Hartman, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940's* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982) 31-32, 45-46, 147-148; D'Ann Campbell, *Women at War with America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 24-25;

95. Putney, *When The Nation Was In Need: Blacks In The Women's Army Corps during World War II* (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1992); Brenda L. Moore's review of Putney's book in the *Negro History Bulletin* (December 1993), 70-72, reveals that Putney was a WAC officer; Martha S. Putney, "Mary McLeod Bethune: Guardian Angel of the Black WACs of World War II," *Journal of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society* 12 (Spring and Summer 1991), 80-87.

96. Bethune to Auxiliary Lucy A. Humes, June 9, 1943, BF; Wilson, *Jim Crow Joins Up*, (New York: William J. Clark, 1944), v.

97. Putney, *When The Nation Was In Need*, 142-143; *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 18, 1942, 8.

98. "Bethune Re-Pledges Loyalty of Women," *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 13, 1941, 8.

99. Bethune quoted from Brenda L. Moore, *To Serve My County, To Serve My Race: The Story of the Only African American WACs Stationed Overseas during World War II* (New York University Press, 1996), 61; Bethune quoted from Putney, "Guardian Angel," 80.

100. Bethune quoted from Moore, *To Serve My Country*, 61; Mattie E. Treadwell, *The*

Women's Army Corps, Volume II of *The United States Army in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1954) 58-59; Putney, "Guardian Angel," 80.

101. Treadwell, *Women's Army*, 592.

102. Aubrey Williams to Henry L. Stimson, June 13, 1942, Aubrey Williams Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.

103. Bethune quoted from Putney, "Guardian Angel," 81.

104. Ibid., 81-82; Bethune quoted from Moore, *To Serve My Country*, 54.

105. Bethune quoted from Putney, "Guardian Angel," 82; *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 3, 1942, 9. Of the 40 African Americans selected for officer training, one failed to report.

106. John A. Lapp to Eleanor Roosevelt, August 12, 1942, BF.

107. Malvina Thompson to Bethune, August 24, 1942, BF; Treadwell, *Women's Army*, 590-591.

108. Putney, "Guardian Angel," 83; Moore, *To Serve My Country*, 71.

109. Howard to Bethune (with attachments), August 21, 1942, Howard to Bethune, Handling of Negro Officer Candidates, August 26, 1942, Charles P. Browning to Bethune, August 24, 1942, BF.

110. Putney, "Guardian Angel," 82; Bethune quoted from *Louisville Defender*, November 21, 1942, Bethune File, Moreland-Spingarn Research Center.

111. *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 5, 1942, 1; Aikens quoted from *Washington Afro-American*, July 10, 1943.

112. Putney, "Guardian Angel," 83-84.

113. *Washington Afro-American*, July 10, 1943.

114. Memphis World, April 13, 1945, BF; Putney, "Guardian Angel, 84; Moore, *To Serve My Country*, 78, Bethune quoted from this source, 7; *Aframerican Woman's Journal*, (December 1945), 6.

115. Moore, *To Serve My Country*, 77; *Aframerican Woman's Journal*, December 1945, 6.

116. Putney, "Guardian Angel," 84; Moore, *To Serve My Country*, 76-77, 80.

117. Bethune quoted from Moore, *To Serve My Country*, 80; Treadwell, *Women's Army*, 559; Putney, *When the Nation Was In Need*, 17.

118. "Guardian Angel," 84-85.

119. Putney, *When the Nation Was In Need*, 9, 15-16; *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 24, 1937, 9.

120. Synder, "Daytona Beach: A Closed Society," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 81 (Fall 2002), 155-185; Treadwell, *Women's Army*, 77-78, 632 and quote in same source, 211; Elizabeth Knapp "Volusia County recalls: The day WACs arrived," *Pelican*, May 16, 1982, 6.

121. Activities in the War Effort, n.d., BF; Leroy Harlow, *Without Fear or Favor: Odyssey of a City Manager* (Salt Lake City: Brigham Young University Press, 1977); Mary Lou Teeter, "Memorial Day Fact: WAACs once occupied Daytona Beach," *Daytona Sun Times*, May 2002, 6.

122. James C. Evans Interview with the Author, November 10, 1972, Washington, D.C.

123. Putney, "Guardian Angel," 80, 84; Bethune to Marcia Henry, July 7, 1948, BF, Part 2, Reel 14.

124. General Dwight Eisenhower to Bethune, February 2, 1948, BF, Part 2, Reel 13.

125. Truman Gibson to Bethune, August 1943, BF.

126. Florence Murray, *The Negro Yearbook, 1944* (New York: Current Reference Publications), 109 (all recommendations given); Moore, *To Serve My Country*, 55.

127. Putney, *When the Nation Was In Need*, 207; Putney, "Guardian Angel," 84.

128. Bethune, "Report of a Hospital Tour in the East,"in *Bethune: Building a Better World*, ed. McCluskey and Smith, 175-177; Bethune to Marcia Henry, July 7, 1948.

129. Julia Jones, "Talk O' Town" [column], *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 8, 1942, 9.

PART II. 1318 VERMONT AVENUE EXPANDING BLACK WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CIVIC AFFAIRS

Chapter 4

Victories and Hopes: New Home, Old Issues

Introduction

Beginning in the mid-1940's, the American star in the world was rising. Turning the corner in the war in the Pacific and in Europe, the United States and Allies went on to triumph in World War II. Yet it and the Soviet Union, a former ally, descended into the Cold War. Nonetheless, they cooperated with others to create the United Nations to promote peace through collective security. It welcomed an ever-increasing number of nations, some just breaking the bonds of colonialism. The U.N. became operative during good times in the U.S. Contributing to prosperity were pent-up demands for civilian goods and services, easy credit, veterans benefits, and rebuilding war-torn Europe through the Marshall Plan. For Africans Americans in war and peace, the “Double V” campaign: Victory Abroad and Victory at Home, reflected their yearnings. Economically, they generally held hard-won gains, as did white women, although black women suffered slippages. But civil rights proved illusive, even with President Harry Truman leading the charge in the post-war period and counting some gains.

As the United States surged forward in the world, women continued to exert less political power than their numbers would suggest, but were always in a better position as group than were African Americans as a group. When acting politically through female organizations they suffered in comparison to pressure groups dominated by men. The latter organizations usually stood for vested interests. With axes to grind, they lobbied with an edge and their constituents contributed mega-bucks to campaigns. An organization such as the homogenous National Business and Professional Women's Clubs, which consisted mostly of salaried employees rather than owners or managers, "lacked the funds and prestige of the men's organizations" and usually had to act alone. Another type of women's organization, the heterogeneous League of Women Voters also lacked an edge because its modus operandi was to study an issue to achieve a consensus. One scholar concluded that by mid-century, American women generally lacked the experience for major policymaking positions in the political sector and lacked the control of wealth in the business sector to have anything but a limited political status.[1]

Yet, women's limited political status had propelled approval by both major parties of the Equal Rights Amendment in principle. It did not result in a legislative victory, however. While all reputable women's groups believed in equal pay for equal work, they divided over the issue of adding these few words to the U.S. Constitution: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." In 1944, the National Council of Negro Women, representing "all the important leadership among Negro women," weighed in. Opposing the Equal Rights Amendment, it explained, "It would not secure equality of treatment for women, except at the heavy cost of abandoning the great body of laws that protect women workers from exploitation." This was in keeping with the thinking of Eleanor Roosevelt, leaders of the major unions, and others. Congress skirted the issue by passing the Full Employment Act of 1946.[2]

The NCNW consistently sided with liberal unions on major policy issues, such as ERA.

When Vice President Estelle Massey Riddle was asked in a 1946 radio interview, what her organization was doing to promote the employment of black women, she enumerated several things. "We stress Union membership as fundamental to job security," was one of them. Along that same line, later that year, her organization's official position was, "We will encourage Negro women workers to study the labor movement and understand their stake in unions, to integrate themselves in union activities and offices, and work for inclusion in unions that now draw the color line." Given all that, it was ironic that the National Council of Negro Women experienced a brouhaha over the unionization of its staff.[3]

On December 12, 1946, four staffers, as members of Local #27, United Office and Professional Workers of America, Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), formally requested that their union be recognized as the sole bargaining agent for the NCNW staff. These were Marian S. Williams, Katheryn S. Shryver, Gladys Thomas, and Ellen Randolph. Phi Beta Kappa Public Relations Secretary Shryver, honored by the NCNW for her work as executive secretary of the National Committee to Abolish the Poll Tax, had only joined the staff that year. On January 25, 1947, when the NCNW Executive Committee met, it determined that with its willingness to provide paid vacations, personal leave time, over-time pay, sick pay and competitive salaries, that something other than the usual bread and butter concerns had led to unionization. With Executive Committee sanctions, on January 27th, the staff was fired. Each member received more than a month's advance pay in lieu of a thirty-day notice. Loans from board members made that possible, for the NCNW had less than $500 in the bank and about $2,500 in unpaid bills, and lacked a bank loan due to the absence of collateral. The only paid employees left were the housekeeper and Executive Director Mame Mason Higgins. The latter resigned on February 15th citing the smear campaign of released employees. While the NCNW lacked the financial stability to honor a union contract, the council's dismissals probably resulted also from Bethune's lack of tolerance for airing negative internal affairs in public. As historian Joyce Ann Hanson illuminates, council leaders considered betrayed by the staff, for they viewed its outside approach to grievances "acts of disloyalty" to the NCNW "family."[4]

Eventually, the NCNW weathered the dissension both internally and externally that firing four employees had created, especially with Anna Arnold Hedgeman as Executive Director and the contributions of member-consultants with specialized expertise. It wasn't easy, however. The council lacked a full staff and Mary Bethune was away during most of the 1946-47 academic term, as acting president of her Florida college. Moreover, the public witnessed the council's greatest weakness: the absence of financial support from the 800,000 plus women it claimed to represent. To supplement dues, the organization continued to limp financially with fundraisers, including sponsorship of a baseball game here, a boat-ride there, Bethune birthday programs around July 10th, and so on. This not only reflected the lack of a tax exempt status, but also the low incomes of black women. After the Second World War, 40 percent of them in the labor force worked as domestics, and so many others were only a half-step from that. These circumstances coupled with disfranchisement for about half of them and poor schooling for many more underscored black women's organizational weakness in influencing national life and their destiny of struggling harder than others to accomplish most things.

Even so, by its tenth birthday, the National Council of Negro Women had grown enough for its President to deem it "a great social force, offering services of information, morale building, leadership training, representation and national unity to Negro women--[and] offering information and opportunity for constructive fellowship to all women."[5] The council did indeed make concerted efforts to reach beyond race, for it included white women leaders as members and in various activities. And, in 1944, it made contact with Washington's international community like never before. Importantly, it helped all to understand that black women had a right to be involved in international matters like others. This was a victory, however symbolic. While adopting a wider outreach, however, the fundamental public issues that the council addressed remained the same, from voting to employment. Central to the issues was the quest for civil rights, a term that gained greater currency with President Harry Truman's Civil Rights Committee. During Mary McLeod Bethune's day, the resolution of civil rights problems remained essentially hopes, even with the realization of piecemeal progress on some fronts. Beginning in late 1943, as the NCNW worked on international and domestic concerns, especially in relation to other women, it benefitted from a headquarters building. That edifice was the organization's greatest internal victory. This chapter of the Historic Resource Study considers these developments.

Concerning Headquarters

No organization with about a score of national affiliates, dozens of local chapters, and hundreds of life members could hope to function effectively near mid-century without a business-like headquarters. Herein is a discussion of the National Council of Negro Women's headquarters in the nation's capital, which it called Council House. The narrative traces the advocacy, realization, dedication, and functions of this building. In addition to housing NCNW's central operations, it provided a home for Founder-President Mary McLeod Bethune. Therefore, this sub-division relates aspects of the edifice of special significance to her. Also, it notes her hope for something grander and her peace with Council House as it was.

Vision and Implementation

For years Mary McLeod Bethune had yearned for the National Council of Negro Women to house itself in a headquarters building. In 1941 as previously, council work was done in the living room of her small, two-room apartment on Ninth Street in the home of a dear friend from secondary school, Cecilia Smith, and her husband John. There, tired secretary Arabella Denniston would fall asleep, after the last volunteer had left with the dawn. For all, this occurred "at the end of a hard day's work on important full-time jobs!"[6] At the 1940 annual council meeting, Bethune had recommended, "First, that the headquarters of the National Council of Negro Women be established in Washington, D.C." Section I of the "Findings" of that conference read, "We endorse the recommendation of our President, Mary McLeod Bethune, that the Council acquire national headquarters, which shall be [a] memorial and shrine in honor of those pioneer Negro women leaders who hewed a pathway for us to follow." The women also wanted "to house and preserve historical archives depicting the history of Negro women."[7] The next year, Bethune kept the idea current. "The ownership of a building in which we could house historical archives of peculiar significance to Negro women is in itself a worthwhile thing," she wrote. "However, in addition to this, the acquisition of a permanent meeting place which would be available to all national groups as well as to the local groups in that community, and which building would reflect the competence of Negro women to purchase and manage an institution is a project which we hope very much were carried out at least within the next five years, if not earlier."[8]

While the NCNW had needed for years the space that a headquarters building would offer, Bethune's exigencies in 1943 accounted for the timing of acquiring it. Fifteen months after the Council Chief had resigned the presidency of her Florida college to focus on work in the National Youth Administration, that agency had unexpectedly lost its funding, leaving Bethune at loose ends. As a consequence of soul searching privately and with friends, she had decided to concentrate on developing the NCNW, with an emphasis on race relations. In late 1943, with the imminent loss of her NYA physical space as the agency rapidly approached complete liquidation, she understood that she had to have somewhere befitting her iconic status to receive visitors and conduct voluminous correspondence. And, if the NCNW were to function credibly, it required more space too.[9]

When Bethune learned of the availability of a row house with garage on Vermont Avenue in northwest Washington, she sent NCNW executive secretary Jeanetta Welch Brown to check it out. After Brown's approval, Bethune moved quickly, for housing in war-time Washington was at a premium. She tapped a few intimates to help with the $500.00 down payment. Either before or after determining to buy, through the good offices of Eleanor Roosevelt, Bethune obtained an appointment with Marshal Field, the enormously wealthy and liberal Chicago businessman who would assist Aubrey Williams to land on his business feet after his NYA career. Bethune solicited from Field $10,000. She applied this on the approximately $15,000 purchase price of the property. She was then ready to move in.[10]

The building was a three-story house with a raised basement at 1318 Vermont Avenue. "With its brick walls, one-story bay window, side-hall entrance, mansard roof with dormers, and rear ell, the house represents a paradigm of the row-house form that emerged in the 1870s," according to the National Park Service authoritative 1993 Historic American Buildings Survey.

When Bethune first saw the building, perhaps she could visualize how she and the organization would utilized its space. Except for storage, the basement, running the full length of the edifice, would be little used. On the first floor, they would receive visitors in the front room. What had been the dinning room would become the NCNW's Board Room, or small group meeting room. The small kitchen to the rear would retain its function. On the second floor, the large room facing the avenue would house the council office staff. Then Bethune could probably see her office next to it, with her bedroom and dressing room to the rear. On the third floor, the kitchenette would be used in the expected way. The other rooms would be bedrooms: three would have twin beds for visiting women and the fourth room, at least one bed for her attendant.[11]

On December 18, 1943, members of NCNW's Executive Committee, Board of Directors, and Legal Committee assembled at 1318 Vermont Avenue to consent to Bethune's headquarters initiative. Collectively, these twenty-four women constituted a driving force in the organization, with the old New York-Washington axis dominating, as usual. As a part of it, Sadie Alexander came from Philadelphia. Four traveled from America's largest metropolis: Audley Moore, Gertrude Robinson, Helen Harden, and Eunice H. Carter. Ten hailed from the nation's capital: Bethune, Sue Bailey Thurman, Edna Browne, Bertie Derrick, Elsie Austin, Dorothy Ferebee, Marion Seymour, Venice Spraggs, Jeanetta W. Brown, Hilda V. Grayson, and Julia Sneed. Another, who lived on the east coast was Harriet Curtis Hall of Boston. After Washington and New York, windy Chicago had the next largest group: Eleanor Curtis Dailey, Marjorie S. Joyner, and Edith S. Sampson. The mid-west was further represented by Detroiters Rosa Gragg and Christine Smith. From western Pennsylvania came Ethel Ramos Harris. The South had only one attendee, Julia Pate Borders of Atlanta.

The group was excited. Attorney Sadie Alexander exclaimed that the place was "beyond our comprehension." All officially approved. Moreover, they voted their beloved President the right to live in the house for life, free of charge. Even so, Bethune probably wound up paying for her quarters, one way or another. It would be her Washington residence until confidant Sadie Franklin packed up her things on November 21, 1950, after that year's annual council meeting. But all that was future. In December 1943, feelings of goodwill and gratitude abounded. The women documented the occasion with a group photo, which would be seem in their *Aframerican Woman's Journal.*[12]

The National Council had landed in a congenial location. "An air of civility and sophistication" prevailed in this desegregated Logan Circle community. It was relatively close to downtown and adjoined other prominent black neighborhoods, including the commercial center of black Washington on U Street. The NCNW's neighbors were about one-half black professionals. These included attorneys Belford and Marjorie Lawson, who lived at 8 Logan Circle and leased their third floor to Congressman Adam Clayton Powell. Bishop Matthews of the African Methodist Episcopal Church lived next door. Sweet Daddy Grace of the United House of Prayer for All People occupied 11 Logan Circle, and Dr. Thomas Smith conducted his medical practice at 14 Logan Circle.[13]

While the council's neighborhood was in good order, it's building needed upgrading. The organization found thousands of dollars to modernize. For example, in went new radiators and plumbing, including new fixtures for the second floor bathroom; and on the third floor, the addition of a bathroom. To furnish the house, Mary McLeod Bethune tapped individuals and organizations. Local businessman Abe Lichtman was responsible for the front parlor. Also, he helped with the board room, which benefitted from Chicago's Congressman William L. Dawson large mahogany conference table and chairs. Other rooms were furnished by council members. On the second floor, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority assumed responsibility for the NCNW office; Delta Sigma Theta, Bethune's office; and Madame C.J. Walker Manufacturing Company, Bethune's bedroom and dressing room. On the third floor, Buena V. Kelly took responsibility for the front bedroom and furnished it in honor of her mother, Emma Kelley, founder of the Daughter Elks; Harriet Curtis Hall and Eleanor Curtis Dailey furnished the room behind it for their mother; and New Yorker Audley Moore took leadership in furnishing the third bedroom in memory of the NCNW former treasurer Bessye Bearden of New York, but it was called alternately the Interracial Room and the International Room.[14]

Dedication

During the summer of '44 while recuperating from undisclosed illness, President Mary Bethune spent some anxious days in Daytona Beach spurring Executive Secretary Brown to get things done for Council House. Upon returning to Washington, the fall NCNW annual meeting was at hand. Climaxing it on October 12-15, 1944, was the dedication of Council House followed by an inspection and reception. For the Sunday dedicatory service, delegates and friends in their coats, furs, hats, and gloves assembled in front of the 1318 Vermont Avenue edifice, with most sitting in seats outside its short, decorative black fence. Major donors and program participants sat chiefly in a semi-circle on the higher ground just in front of the middle bay window. At the appropriate time, each speaker stood in the center of the half circle on a small platform, large enough for two, with a floor microphone in front.[15]

When at 4:00 p.m. excerpts began from Antonin Dvorak's symphony, *From the New World*, all knew that the program had started. Edith Sampson began her assignment of presiding. Then came *The Lord's Prayer*. Bethune welcomed everybody. Elsie Austin gave facts about the new headquarters. She concluded, "This house has been obtained by the prayers and sacrifice of a few, but the devotion, idealism and ambition which surround it will spread to many; and the inspired efforts which it shall generate in years to come will be felt around the world." Esther Popel offered verses written for the occasion called "Jewels of Distinction," which President Bethune received. Three of America's leading women presented stimulating comments about the occasion: publisher-social worker Agnes E. Meyer, educator Charlotte Hawkins Brown, and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. Bethune's D.C. pastor, Reverend Robert M. Williams of Asbury Methodist Church gave a prayer. Eunice H. Carter, chair of the Board of Trustees, formally turned over house keys to Dorothy Ferebee, chair of the House Committee. She in turn, opened the door to all gathered. When entering the beautifully decorated parlor, individuals faced flags from around the world displayed on the mantel in a semi-circular flag stand. The flags reminded all of the National Council's commitment to touch the world.[16]

Two days later, Bethune relived the occasion for her friend and Daytona Beach physician of many decades, Texas A. Adams.

> The dedication of our building Sunday was the grandest of them all [of all events during the annual council meeting]. You would really be very happy to see us in our setting now. The women laid down $9,275.00 in cash and thirty-day pledges. It was a most glorious outpouring of gifts by women I have ever seen. The dedication was held on the outside with police escorts, who had the streets blocked off from three to six in the evening. Washington turned out in her fullest.[17]

House Functions

Council House functioned in multiple and overlapping ways. It served as President Mary Bethune' Washington residence and office, and derived a stream of traffic from her interests. For example, since she usually favored a collective approach to problems, which the "Black Cabinet" had once embodied, from time to time she consulted with black leaders at her residence, as in 1945. In April she met with Washington businessmen for undisclosed reasons; in May, with leaders of national organizations to discuss pending legislation; and in June, with a group of men and women leaders to consider ways to maintain African Americans' wartime gains. Also, Bethune welcomed the local alumni chapter of Barber-Scotia College, her alma mater. It met there for business meetings and to host at least one tea. Just as local Scotia alumni used Council House, so did other local groups, including the D.C. metropolitan chapter of the NCNW and its youth council. NCNW's national affiliates or subdivisions thereof used the house too, including the National Association of Beauty School Owners and Teachers, Chi Eta Phi Sorority for nurses, and the Daughter Elks. People found the Council House site useful for an assortment of other reasons such as lodging for sixty-two women in six years; meetings of interracial church groups; a reception for a local physician; and on June 2, 1945, the venue for a wedding, the only one there in the 1940's.[18]

The Council House functioned, however, chiefly as the business and social site of the NCNW. Various council committees convened meetings there, from the Committee on Employment to the one on Intercultural Affairs. The group charged with the upkeep of Council House, appropriately called the House Committee, met more frequently there than any other. In 1949, it probably worked overtime in refurbishing the building. Along with conducting business, the council staged various social affairs, such as an Open House in January 1945, from 4:00 to 10:00, on President Franklin Roosevelt's Fourth Inauguration Day. People who came were among the more than four thousand visitors to the house in the 1940's.[19]

One way of understanding the significance of Council House is to juxtapose its functions to the bedrock overlapping objectives of the National Council of Negro Women as delineated in Chapter One of this study. These were to unite or federate national organizations of black women; to collect, preserve, interpret, and disseminate data of interest to black women; to foster the participation of black women in national affairs "in the same manner as other Americans participate;" and to serve as "a channel and articulation for millions of Negro women in their struggle for opportunity and equality." The annual meeting was essential to uniting national organizations, the first objective of the council, and Council House facilitated this. The staff there probably went on overload around that time. It participated in various planning meetings and sent out much correspondence. Considering the lack of hotel accommodations because segregation ruled, probably Council House rooms for visiting women were taken early and accounted for most of its sixty-two lodgers in the 1940's. During the conference, very likely some staffer was always at the house to answer inquiries.

Even though most sessions of the annual meeting were scheduled at the Department of Labor, some sessions were held at Council House. In 1947 when twenty-three national organizations were affiliated with the NCNW, for example, the day before the formal opening the Board of Directors--including presidents of national affiliates, Executive Committee, Metropolitan (local) Council Presidents, and the Headquarters Board of Trustees met at 1318 Vermont Avenue, northwest. That was in the morning. In the afternoon all these groups met collectively. Additionally, the Nominating Committee and Program Committee met. Registration occurred from 4:00 to 9:00 p.m. At 6:00 p.m., the organization met the press. Six days later, the Board of Directors, Executive Committee, Board of Trustees, and Metropolitan Council Presidents all came back to headquarters for a final session, although the climax of the convention had occurred the night before.[20]

Just as Council House promoted the council's first objective, it did the same for the second. Much collecting, interpreting, and disseminating data of interest to black women, transpired in relation to the annual meeting. Also, much of this occurred through TELEFACT, the council's monthly newsletter, compiled at Council House and disseminated from it. The council staff also contributed to *Aframerican Woman's Journal* and its successor, *Women United*. This was in fulfillment of the clearinghouse function, essential to a coordinating organization. But by 1949, constitutionally, the council was also to "preserve information particularly affecting women." On June 30, 1946, it advanced this goal through the observance of National Archives Day, complete with a brochure detailing ways it could be celebrated. Vice President Estelle Massy Riddle [Osborne] publicized that it was "a project designed to give impetus to the building of a National Museum at Council House- where the records, letters, books, pictures, medals and other authentic materials, suggestive of the struggles and accomplishments of Negro women can be assembled." Delta Sigma Theta Sorority observed the occasion, for example, with an "Authors' Tea" at Council House, during which black women authors and their works were presented. It was one of twenty-five receptions and teas there while Mary McLeod Bethune was president.[21]

As early as 1940, Sue Thurman had begun collecting for a NCNW historical exhibit on black women. Six years later, Thurman's mother, Mrs. S.E. Bailey of McDermott, Arkansas, gave $1,000 to foster that type of endeavor. This spurred the development of a council library (and archives), that the organization dedicated to Bailey's memory on April 14, 1948. Interestingly, this paneled library was called also the conference room and the board room. Apparently, NCNW historian Sue Thurman was undeterred by the limited space therein. In 1949, Thurman's committee requested that each local council bring a gift for the archives, and dress a black doll who would be named for a regional or national black woman; "that each region contribute a fine painting of a great Negro woman;" and that each council woman to submit her biographical statement.

The Library and Museum Committee had already received a nice cache of items. It possessed one hundred commemorative stamps of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which abolishing slavery. It had old newspaper clippings, historic clothes, an identity locket from the slavery era, and a veteran's Civil War medal. Moreover, it had President Bethune's Spingarn Medal that she had presented "in a deeply moving ceremony."[22] This was the NAACP annual award, the most prestigious in the Negro World, given to an African American making the greatest contribution to society. Bethune had won it in 1935 for founding and developing Bethune-Cookman College into a standard junior college.

In addition to advancing the uniting and clearinghouse-preservation objectives, the Council House furthered also the other two bedrock NCNW goals. In the 1940's, the thrust of them involved mainstream society, for the organization was to foster black women's participation in it and to represent black women there. Bethune had joined these objectives and

Council House together at its dedication. "Here women of all nationalities can come together without fear or hesitancy, secure in the knowledge that they meet as equals and as workers striving together," she proclaimed. "We can think together objectively and opportunely and coordinate, for the greater benefit of mankind all the able and find things that women are doing. And finally," she said, "to take action swiftly and with deep purpose in the name of our common humanity."[23]

Judging from the report of the House Committee five years later, the kinds of interactions at headquarters with other women that council members had envisioned, in fact, occurred. House Committee chair Regina Chandler reported, "Our visitors and House Guests have been women of every nationality. It has given the women of other countries and races a chance to study and know more about the colored Americans' way of life and cultural activities. There have been women in every field of endeavor, Education, Art and Science," she maintained, "which has enriched the progress by integrating all women in better understanding the social, civic and political problems of the world." The House Committee further concluded, "The simple cup of coffee in the morning and the discussing of world affairs in the president's room or office with women from abroad and here at home have done much to achieve the glorious destiny of true and unfettered democracy."[24]

The non-African American women who visited Council House did so for varied reasons, just as others. Some came for meetings. The Continuation Committee stemming from the Coordinating Committee of Women's Organizations for Building Better Race Relations, met bi-monthly during 1944-1946 at Council House "to hear and exchange information from other members on current situations which involve minorities and to appraise the work of the various organizations in this area," Mary Bethune reported in 1946. "This group has achieved a deep sense of fellowship while working together during the past two years," she stated. [25] In addition to meetings, some non-African American women visited Council House for parties, teas, and receptions. Probably the most impressive reception held there occurred in February 1948 for Haitian Ambassador Joseph D. Charles and Liberian Minister C.B.D. King and Mrs. King. The one that members looked forward to annually, however, recognized NCNW women honorees. For five years, beginning in 1945, the council designated a total of seventy-one women to receive its "Scroll of Honor." The scroll of anti-poll tax activist Virginia Durr, presented at a Council House reception, was illustrative of inscriptions.

> The National Council of Negro Women, Inc.
> Presents This Scroll of Honor to
> Virginia Foster Durr
> who has dared to cross frontiers of tradition, class
> and race to become a crusader in political action
> in the interests of the common people.

Durr's scroll bore the city of the award, Washington, D.C., the date, March 15, 1946, and the signature of Mary McLeod Bethune.[26] In that year, eleven other women received citations. The best known were former ambassador Daisy Harriman, publisher-social worker Agnes Myer, and Congresswoman Helen Gahagan Douglas, California Democrat. Probably council members were proudest of Charity Adams, who commanded the only black women's battalion of the Women's Army Corps to serve in Europe during the war. Two years later, the two female members of President Truman's Committee on Civil Rights, Sadie Alexander and M.E. Tilley headed a record eighteen honorees. The next year, Congresswomen Frances Bolton, Ohio Republican, and Chase Going Woodhouse, Connecticut Democrat, received scrolls along with

High Jump Gold Medalist Alice Coachman, a student at Georgia's Albany State College, and twelve others.[27]

Of the five "Roll of Honor" receptions at Council House in the '40's, the first one was the most memorable, and, of course, set precedents for the others. News of the event appeared in the women's pages in the black press, complete with program highlights and who wore what. The council mailed out a formal invitation stating that the reception started at 4:00 p.m. on a Saturday. In a general sense, it indicated reasons for the occasion. "Today when human values are so intimately tied in with the world-wide struggle for liberation," it began, "women are demonstrating in individual and group activities a sense of responsibility to their country and their times." It continued.

> The National Council of Negro Women is privileged today to honor these representative American women, who are but a symbol of the mind, the heart and soul of the womanhood of the world, who unitedly work for a world of peace, freedom and justice for all.[28]

Columnist Pearl Cox declared that it proved that the National Council of Negro Women was "catching the nation's eye." "You should have seen the 600 guests," she gushed, "that crowded the halls and stairs and jammed every room of the Council House [on] February 10, 1945." Maybe Cox got carried away. Mable Alston of the *Afro-American* estimated that "more than 500" were in attendance. Anyway, Cox declared: "And such a Roll! Eleanor Roosevelt, 'Woman of the Year;' Lillian Smith, author of *Strange Fruit*; Mary Ingraham, president, National Board, Y.M.C.A.; Anna A. Hedgemen, executive secretary of the National Committee for [a] Permanent FEPC [Fair Employment Practices Committee]," and other women acclaimed mostly for civic leadership.

Most of the sixteen honored women accepted the award at Council House. That contributed to the beauty of the occasion. In addition to those already named, the group included nurse-activist Mabel K. Staupers, American Women's Voluntary Services founder Alice T. McLean, NAACP field secretary Daisy Lampkin, anti-poll tax activist Katherine Shryer, Women's Army for National Defense founder Lovonia H. Brown, labor union vice-president Dorothy Bellanca, Non-Partisan Council legislative representative Thomasina W. Johnson, and NCNW executive secretary Jeanetta Welch Brown. Of the sixteen honorees, four were no-shows: columnist Dorothy Thompson and actress-singer Lena Horne had previous engagements; war correspondent Bettye M. Phillips and Washington Urban League executive secretary Pauline Redmond Coggs were ill.

Just as the honorees made this first "Roll of Honor" reception special, so did the program. It occurred before the guests were introduced. Solos, tributes, and speeches all had a place. Washington's Nannie Helen Burroughs, leader of Baptist women in her convention and founder-principal of the National Training School for Women and Girls gave the principal address. Madam Andre Liataud, wife of the Haitian Ambassador brought greetings. Madam Wei Two-Ming, Wife of the Chinese Ambassador sent a message. Those extolling the virtues of the honorees included Congresswoman Helen Gahagan Douglas, NCNW president Mary McLeod Bethune, and sculptress Selma Burke. Also, Burke presented a bust of Bethune, just completed for the occasion.[29]

Special to Bethune

Although Mary McLeod Bethune regarded all of the Council House as important, some rooms held a particular significance. The first was the living room or in Victorian vernacular, the parlor. There, she and her council members received visitors, who probably formed opinions about the organization based on what they saw. It had to be representative. Another favored space was her personal office, in which most of the business conducted related to the council. Then, of course, Bethune's bedroom was special to her. In this subdivision of the Resource Study, in addition to noting Bethune's aspirations for NCNW headquarters, images of these three rooms are reconstructed. They are as detailed or as vague as the photographs on which they are chiefly based.

Reception Room

Most photos of the front parlor illustrate its narrow width. When NCNW members took their first group picture in it they were in two rows: the first had nine members seated in fold-up chairs arranged in an attractive partial semi-circle; the second row consisted of fifteen members standing behind them. Had the photographer wanted the first row straight across the room, it would have been a tight squeeze, if not impossible. Once the room was furnished, especially with a baby grand piano, less space existed for such groups to pose. Almost always they assumed an arc position.[30]

Most people entered this front parlor from the front hall through large pocket doors, which appear original to the house. They faced a cut-glass prism chandelier, whose beauty was reflected in a large mirror, about the width of the mantel and extending from its base to the molding below the ceiling. The white marble French mantel, characterized by curving lines, floral ornamentation, and an arched opening, encase the fireplace. It appears original to the house. Aside from natural light provided by the two side windows in the adjoining room, separated mostly by another set of large pocket doors, most natural light came through the three windows in the bay "nearly the full height of the 12'-high first-floor walls" bordered by ten-inch dark wood baseboards. The windows are large "since the entire north wall and half of the south wall lack windows."

Nothing points to the excellent NCNW make-over of this front parlor than a comparison of before and after photos taken with the bay in the background, the angle of the majority of this room's photos. In the "before" picture, a sisal-like striped rug covers most of the hardwood floor. The curtained windows blend in with the walls, although their vertical wood frames are evident. Given the plainness of the window coverings, probably no top window treatment exist. The walls have no visible ornamentation.

In any "after" photo, this view is different. Probably showing off the room best is a photo appearing in the March 1945 *Aframerican Woman's Journal*, featuring Bethune leaning on the piano. (It appears in photocopied form at the end of the chapter.)[31] In this and in other photos, some hints of the rich wall to wall carpet, exhibiting swirling dark and light hues in a floral pattern show up. The front side walls of the parlor are centered by a decorated oval design in wall paper that extends down to wainscoting. But the most striking aspect of an after photo are the windows. When not obstructed by a group of people, they are a focal point of the room. Colored venetian blinds hang in them, with dark vertical bands keeping the horizontal slats in place. These blinds are always visible, although each window is framed by shinny drapes and swags with a stand-out vertical floral pattern repeated throughout. Each drape panel bordering the side walls are tied back with the drape fabric, while the other four panels fall naturally to the floor. Extending from a wide cornice, a swag with graceful folds emanating from the center of each hangs over every window. Its straight sides fall just a few inches below the length of the swag. The parts touching the interior drape panels are folded neatly and tapered into a design.

Not only the rich yet restrained window treatment made the bay a focal point, but also its furnishings. The center window features a pedestal table with double decker rounded tiers separated by a slender column perhaps twelve to eighteen inches long. The bottom surface is larger than the upper. The table is flanked on each side by an armless upholstered chair that rolls outward at the top, with dark accents on both sides highlighting the curvatures of the back and seat, which are dressed in a glossy textured fabric. The only thing visible of the chair's square base is long fringe, in two rows. Angled towards each other, the chairs are the furniture pieces de resistance.

Other impressive furnishings, however, adorned the room. A baby grand piano dominates the south front wall. It's bench is near the bay. A floor lamp with the glass shade turned upward occupies the corner. About one or two feet in front of each side of the white marble mantel stands a dark wood chair with caned sides, each slightly facing the other. On the side of the mantel to the back of the room appears a dark wood framed sofa and coffee table. Opposite it is another small sofa with a lamp table and shaded column lamp near the hall entry way. On the other side of the entry is a dark wood-frame occasional arm chair, a small sofa, and a twin table and lamp. All three sofas may be tuxedo style or close to it, for their arms might be the same height as their backs. The photographs this writer viewed did not picture the two sofas in the back section of the room clearly enough to identify definitively.

This front parlor exudes a Victorian ambience in keeping with the architecture. As in many nineteenth century Victorian homes, it was the best decorated space in the house.

Frequently in such a home, a piano was in the room, sending unspoken messages: the owner had wealth enough to afford one and the mistress of the house was musically accomplished. Not only did the Council House possess a piano, but a baby grand. Mary McLeod Bethune had insisted upon it, although neither she or the council could afford one. Nor could they afford other furnishings in the reception room. The resourceful and persuasive Founder-President prevailed upon Abe Lichtman, owner of Washington's Howard Theater and other theaters that African Americans patronized, to furnish and decorate the room as if it were his own home. This he did, using his own decorators. The results pleased all concerned. In thanking the Lichtmans, Bethune declared, "I realized that I stood in the atmosphere of culture and refinement [in our reception room] that will help so much to build the unity we all so much desire." To a ole friend in Daytona Beach she wrote, "I wish you could see the house here. It is superb."[32]

Bethune's Office

In the headquarters building, Bethune got the office she needed. It was located on the second floor between the bathroom and the large NCNW office fronting Vermont Avenue. Fortunately, it contained a window "in the west wall, near the corner where the ell meets the main part of the building." This writer found four photographs of Bethune in her office, circa 1945-1950: three black-and-whites; the other, color. In each she is seated behind her ample wooden desk topped by a glass cover, with no book shelf or file cabinet in sight, although logic suggests that they would have occupied the room. "From the Atlantic and the Pacific come calls to this desk," Bethune told one visiting newspaperman. "They call me from the Government departments--the War Department, the navy, the Wacs [Women's Army Corps]. . . as if I were a paid person. People just come to me."[33]

The black and white pictures are mostly alike, exhibiting the desk facing the wall that has an entry to the adjacent NCNW office. Partially revealed behind the desk on one side is a closet; on the other, the window, decorated with venetian blinds and pleated floral drapes in good contrast to the room's plainness. In between is a blank wall, except for a narrowly framed photograph, appearing to be eight by ten. In one office view, a crucifix hangs beneath it.[34] Enough space is behind the desk for Bethune to sit comfortably in an office-type desk chair and have three women standing behind her. In the photo of these women, Bethune's desk top is on display. It shows a desk pad with sheaves of paper in a notebook-like folder on it, the standard black telephone of the period; day-by-day appointment calender, In Box filled with papers, writing pen holders with a pen actually in one, a few books between small book-ends, a dish--perhaps for candy, a glass paperweight, three roses in a small glass vase, and a few miscellaneouss items. Also, on front edge of the desk, in the center, appears a name plate of raised letters reading "Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune."[35] A glass-covered dark wood table extends from the middle of the desk, long enough to accommodate two individuals sitting on each side with room for a fifth at the end facing Bethune. This photo of the NCNW President and seven other women handling mail, reveals that two are sitting in upholstered arm chairs. It appeared on the cover of the Winter 1947-1948 issue of the *Aframerican Woman's Journal* carrying the caption, "All Hands Pressed in Service." The photograph suggests that at times Bethune's office became a general council workroom.[36]

Accompanying Genevieve Forbes Herrick's article on Bethune in the September 23, 1950 issue of *Collier's* magazine is the color photograph of the subject--taken after the other three, as Bethune's completely white hair revealed. For August 8, 1950, Bethune noted in her diary that she made pictures for *Collier's*. In this room carpeted in a lush maroon, Bethune is at her desk with its extender pulled out and her exquisitely-crafted cane against it. The cane had belonged to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. After he died, it came to Bethune from his wife Eleanor. Two new things are on the desk: a photograph of Bethune with her son Albert McLeod Bethune, Sr., and a long-armed horizontal flourescent lamp extending over the desk from its side. Bethune sits in an elegant, dark wood curvilinear arm chair, with the seat topped in a muted blue fabric. This is the same background color in the wallpaper decorating one of the two walls seen in the photograph. The pattern consist of delicate groupings of different white flowers, seemingly painted over the blue as if they were thin clouds in the sky.[37]

Bedroom

This same wallpaper appears on the side of Bethune's bedroom window. In the July 1949 *Ebony*, this investigator saw it in a small photograph of the room. In this shot, a traditional, dark-colored, solid headboard characterized by a backward curve at the top covers about two-thirds of a completely curtained window. In front of the other third is a dark night table, holding a shaded white lamp made of a delicately-shaped light ceramic base. A plain, light chenille spread dresses the bed, which is devoid of decorative pillows or other accents. In a long-sleeve, floor length robe, Bethune is sitting in an upholstered wing-back chair with her feet on an ottoman or footstool, turning the nob of a small television located on what could have been an end-table. This view of Bethune's room probably shows her furniture, but it appears to have been rearranged just for the photo because the T.V. is *not* positioned where Bethune could watch it from her easy chair. The maroon carpeting in the office probably covered Bethune's bedroom floor since the Council House Artifacts Inventory reveals maroon carpeting for the entire second floor.[38]

Mary McLeod Bethune's bedchamber was the first room at the top of the stairs on the second floor. It had two windows overlooking the mini alley, which separated the Council House from the adjoining residence to the south. On the wall with the room's entry door, stood a fireplace encased in marble, as the one in the downstairs reception room. At the rear of the bedroom a small dressing room adjoined it, with Bethune's dressing table holding "in precise order, the latest in toiletries."

While some have written of Bethune's second floor "suite," maybe the lady, herself, didn't think of it has a unit. Bethune had access to her office and bathroom from the hall. Most likely, all non-boarding visitors used this same bathroom because none other existed except the one on the third floor. It was impossible for anybody to go up or down the main staircase on the second floor without passing Bethune's bedroom. Too often she probably heard passer-byes, especially on the way to the bathroom or the NCNW office facing the street. The whole arrangement was less than ideal for an overworked, overweight, older woman suffering regularly from an assortment of maladies.

In 1949 when Mary Bethune spoke of the need for black women "to build a permanent center in the nation's capital to serve both as command post for the council's far-flung activities and a monument to the American Negro woman," perhaps, she thought that it might also cater to the comfort and convenience of the NCNW leader living there.[39] A suite with a private bath accessed directly from the bedroom and located away from the floor's primary traffic flow would be in order. And, if above the first floor, an elevator would be nice. Had funds existed, Bethune would have installed one at 1318 Vermont Avenue to avoid the twenty-some steps from the first to the second floor.

The inconvenience Bethune endured at the above address probably added to her sense of relaxation when she went to 631 Pearl Street, Daytona Beach. In this two-story, white frame residence surrounded by green lawns and tall palm and oak trees, no unusually high ceilings made the climb to the second story harder. No national office functioned down the hall from her bedroom, and she didn't have to share a bathroom with a host of visitors. There, her private bath was accessible only from her bedroom. This bedchamber of large and impressively crafted dark wood furniture featured a wall of windows, one in intricately designed beautiful stained-glass, i which overlooked one end of her oak-shaded college. This had to have been good therapy.[40]

Aspiration and Reality

Almost from the beginning, Bethune found that Council House was too small. The width of its lot was only twenty-three feet. As early as March 24, 1945, about two months after a reception there with wall to wall people, House Committee chair Dorothy Ferebee reported--at a NCNW meeting in the White House--of "the need for expansion to include a dining room on the first floor, as a means of extending our interracial work." Bethune then announced that the council would establish a Finance Raising Committee for $15,000. After another overflow reception about three years later, Bethune had determined that only another headquarters would suffice. On February 24, 1948, she wrote Sadie Alexander, "I have found the dream house for the Council Headquarters. . . . It is spacious, beautiful and detached, right off Dupont Circle and would afford us the kind of cultural setting and surrounding that our Council must have." Also, Bethune noted, "I have had this idea in mind all these years." The next month she informed Sue Thurman, "We had selected a place on Dupont Circle but a racial question has arisen and it may be difficult to get it but we are going forward. I want to get the consent of the members to go forward so that we may broaden out into a spacious building where our conferences may be held and can build for permanency."[41] By late October, it appeared that the "racial question" had trumped, for to a non-council member the Council Chief wrote, "We want a beautiful house on DuPont Circle or Massachusetts Avenue or somewhere where all the people, together, may build a better world." Bethune did more than write private letters. She won approval for a new $100,000 "palatial mansion in exclusive DuPont Circle" from the Executive Board. Moreover, she drummed up support for this "Dream House" among the membership.[42]

That Bethune wanted something grander than the council's Vermont Avenue place came as no surprise to anyone familiar with her work in the National Association of Colored Women. She had been the driving force in its acquisition of a $25,000 headquarters building opened in 1928--without anybody giving an especially large sum--at 12th and O Streets Northwest, within walking distance of Council House. Constructed of massive ashlar masonry blocks, it was a detached, two and a half story edifice with a full basement in the Richardsonian Romanesque architectural style popular in the 1890s for large civic and public buildings. As chair of the Board of Trustees for this facility, she had endeavored to expand it in the early 1940's, but the elected Association leaders balked. If Mary McLeod Bethune believed that the National Association of Colored Women, in its detached Romanesque-type building, required additional room, certainly she was committed to obtaining more for the NCNW. Nevertheless, this became an unrealized hope.[43]

Although a woman of vision, Bethune knew how to make the most of that at hand. Certainly, she was not one to cast aspersions on her handiwork. Although disappointed that a more spacious NCNW building did not materialize during her presidency, she suppressed that fact, especially in 1949 when facing retirement (only to advocate a new headquarters again in the 1950's). But before relinquishing the presidency, she told council members the following about Council House.

> The soft velvet rug that carpets the staircase that leads to the office of the president has felt the tread of many feet--famous feet and humble feet; the feet of eager workers and the feet of those in need; and tired feed, like my own, these days. I walked through our headquarters, beautifully furnished by friends who caught our vision, free from debt! I walk through the lovely reception room where the great crystal chandelier reflects the colors of the international flags massed behind it--the flags of the world! I go into the paneled library with its conference table, around which so many great minds have met to work at the problems of the past years. I feel a sense of peace.[44]

Internationalism

Internationalism had constituted a part of NCNW since the founding of the organization and it continued so between 1944 and 1949. The council participated in the first post-war meeting of the U.S.-European oriented International Council of Women, which was held at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, September 5-12, 1947. Mary McLeod Bethune was one of the ten official delegates of the U.S. National Council of Women, and the thirty Philadelphia NCNW members who attended hailed her participation as superb representation. In addition to Eurocentic bonds, the National Council of Negro Women continued to reach out to non-white women and finding kindred spirits, especially in India's Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, the sister of Indian leader Jawaharlal Nehru, who became the first woman ambassador to the United States and later, the president of the U.N. General Assembly. The council's closest ties, however, were with internationals of African descent, as signified in February 1948 by a formal reception at Council House for Ambassador Joseph D. Charles of Haiti and Minister and Mrs. C.B.D. King of Liberia.[45] By that time, the council's internationalism had become institutionalized in its annual meeting. Its leaders regarded, however, the founding conference of the United Nations and its subsequent support as its chief international concern. Also, in 1949, a new forum developed for a council representative to speak in foreign capitals in the name of the organization. This section surveys these matters.

At Annual Meetings

From 1944 to the end of Bethune's presidency, the council consistently focused on relationships with an international community. During the NCNW's annual meeting on Friday evening, October 13, 1944, in the Labor Department Auditorium, the first international session involving personnel from a number of foreign embassies began. Extending greetings by letter were the Canadian, Venezuelan, Yugoslav, Uruguayan, Polish and Peruvian embassies. Giving expressions orally were representatives of the Phillippines, Liberia, Mexico, Costa Rica, France, China, Haiti, Great Britain, and Belgium. One reporter believed that the diplomats' participation was "extraordinary." As so often at NCNW formal programs, the Howard University Choir sang and more music came from other performers. While former U.S. Ambassador to Norway Florence Harriman delivered the chief address, intrepid organizational trailblazer Mary Church Terrell and Howard University's notable history professor Rayford Logan spoke also. The internationalism of the evening, according to Marjorie McKenzie [Lawson] "was to plunge the council's membership into conscious identification with the stream of world organization and to help it fit the problems of Negro women into the huge framework of the great issues of our century. Mary McLeod Bethune remarked, "Our international and interracial meeting held at the Departmental Auditorium, was far beyond our most sanguine expectations."[46]

From there, International Night took off. It became a highly anticipated feature of the NCNW annual conference and always attracted embassy personnel. Representatives--including many ambassadors--of more than twenty-five embassies and legations attended the program three years later. "The keynote theme of the meeting was the urgency of relief for starving men, women, and children of Europe,"ran a line from the *Pittsburgh Courier*'s article on "NCNW Program Boosts International Relations." During the '49 conference, wives of several ambassadors received NCNW members for tea. Embassy visits substituted for the annual reception at the White House, for the President and his family had moved out due to extensive restoration.[47]

Regrading the United Nations

The NCNW's internationalism, however, targeted the world situation in the spring of 1945, when the war in Europe was winding down. Then, the United States had determined to do a better job of winning the peace than after World War I. A United Nations was in the works. The configurations of its charter were to be decided in San Francisco at the United Nations Conference on International Organization. With fifty nations participating, this was the most significant international gathering of the era. Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinus led the five-member U.S. delegation, which included a woman, Virginia Gildersleeve, dean of Barnard College.

If the U.S. had few official representatives, it had ample consultants. The State Department accredited representatives from forty-two organizations as consultants. Bethune coveted a consultancy for her National Council of Negro Women. Having certified five white women's organizations, the State Department turned her down, conveying the idea that reopening the consultant list would be like opening Pandora's Box. Bethune, however, would not take no for an answer. Leaning on her high level contacts, the State Department approved her as an associate consultant with the NAACP, the only predominately African American with the status of consultant. Bethune had an honorary vice-presidency in that organization. In many situations she had worked closely with Executive Secretary Walter White, a consultant to the U.N. meeting, and on occasion with scholar-editor W.E.B. DuBois, an associate consultant. Prior to the conference Bethune noted, "Negro women like all other women must take a part in building this world, and must therefore keep informed of all world-shaping events."[48]

Although the National Council of Negro Women was not a recognized organizational consultant, Mary McLeod Bethune would never let such a technicality obstruct images she wanted to project. "Through the president of the NCNW in her capacity as associate consultant to the American delegation," she reported to the National Council of Women of the U.S., "and through other members of the Council who were with her, the NCNW participated in one of the most important meetings on international affairs." "It was gloriously significant to see so large a group of Negro women in action and as observers at such an historic gathering," Bethune reported to her own organization. "Their presence and influence was felt among the other women of America and the world." Council members attending this U.N. conference were Dorothy Ferebee, Eunice Hunton Carter, Sue Bailey Thurman, Mame Mason Higgins, Mamie Davis, Ida Jackson, Vada Somerville, Hazel MacBeth, Jessie Terry, Buena Kelly Berry, Theresa Lee Robinson, Jewell House, Pauline Dailey, and Blanche Wilson. While Bethune mentioned these fourteen by name, other council members attended as well. The NCNW leader considered the associate consultantship, her most cherished honor. "I regard it as the greatest opportunity of my life to lend my strength and spiritual power to the building of a new and better one-world," she declared.[49] Retrospectively, it appears strange that only a single black woman could attend such a significant world meeting in an official capacity.

In a war-weary world, Bethune subscribed totally to the hope that the U.N. Conference embodied. Staying on the West Coast five weeks, her days were too full. She wrote Jeanetta Brown, "Regardless of the National Council or Bethune-Cookman, or anything else, my strength and thought must be given to this World Conference. This is so much value to the millions who will come after me." She stayed weeks longer than planned. While in California she spoke thirty-seven times at university assemblies, national and international gatherings, and other forums. She proclaimed, "Through the conference the Negro becomes closely allied with all the darker races of the world, but more importantly, he becomes integrated into the structure of the peace and freedom of all people, everywhere--the darker people are no longer a numerical minority."[50]

Below is a segment of Associate Consultant Bethune's official conference report.

> Consultants held regularly scheduled meetings with delegates and technical experts on pivotal questions. Our job was to advise through discussion and later in recommendations to the American delegation, ideas and principles of the Charter. It was here that Dr. W.E.B. DuBois and I as associate Consultants and Walter White Consultant . . . played a distinctive role as members of the greatest racial minority in America. It was here that I never failed to voice the hopes and aspirations of the Negro people. I interviewed and conferred with many important persons, delegates, experts, and consultants, winning them to sympathy and support for a liberal position with regard to the abolition of colonialism, the

> international bill of rights, and the inclusion of an adequate educational and cultural program into the Charter of the United Nations.[51]

In the spring of '46, the U.N., particularly through its Commission on the Status of Women, received Bethune as an honored guest at a reception for delegates and distinguished participants in the organization. Later that year, the NCNW expressed appreciation to its President "for her work toward the establishment and adequate program for the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women." Bethune's determined involvement with the U.N. set an example for her members. In the post-war years, council women discussed U.N. matters and American foreign policy and supported endeavors for global order and peace. Designed to further its members knowledge of and interest in the U.N., the National Council observed "World Security Month," in the spring of '45. To encourage each council group to develop an international program, one sister journalist argued, "Don't be an ostrich. . . the world has closed in around us and we are only just so many hours away from every section of the globe. We may as well recognize the fact that what affects Timbuctoo [Timbuktu], affects us and vice versa." At Council House the NCNW launched the month with Archibald McLeish of the State Department.[52] It participated in various U.N. meetings, such as the one on Non-Governmental Organizations in 1948. The next year, it participated in the second U.S.-wide observance of United Nations Day, brought about through the efforts of the National Citizens' Committee, through which the NCNW worked. In fact, Bethune was in the delegation that visited President Harry Truman to request that he make the day official, which he did.[53]

Eunice Hunton Carter, a well-traveled council member who attended the founding of the U.N. with Bethune, significantly advanced NCNW's U.N. interests. She was its official observer to that body. This provided her, as she described it, a "ringside seat in the arena of world diplomacy." On behalf of her organization, she joined several observer groups, including Women United for the U.N. and the Conference Committee of the United States Organizations for the U.N. It was through the observer groups that strong voices such as Hunton's contributed to resolutions forwarded to the United States U.N. delegation. While council women adamantly advocated a ban on the production of the atom bomb, they were more vocal about the plight of dependent peoples around the world. Therefore, they took a special interest in the work of the U.N.'s Director of Trusteeships, Dr. Ralph Bunche, a black brother. In 1948, for example, they stood against Italy regaining African colonies lost in World War II.[54]

Edith Sampson with the World Tour

The NCNW's internationalism exhibited several faces. The face of Edith Sampson glowed the brightest. In the summer of 1949, this Chicago attorney and chair of the council's Executive Committee took a two-month, 35,000-mile odyssey around the world, stopping in seventeen capital cities. Traveling as the council's representative, but at her own expense, she was a member of the Town Hall World Seminar, an incorporated program to broaden Americans' understanding of global issues, to voice the U.S. interest to people around the world, and to promote peace and the democratic process. The Seminar included delegates from twenty-six other prominent organizations, including the American Bankers Association, the American Library Association, the American Legion, American Federation of Labor, Lions International, the NAACP, U.S. Conference of Mayors and others. While wounding down, the seminar elected Sampson its president. Her primary responsibility was to take to the American people in all regions the findings of the group. The NCNW had claimed innumerable times that it existed, in part, to give black women representation in national and international affairs. It did itself proud in designating Sampson to the Town Hall Seminar. She gained great visibility and subsequently, landed an appointment as a U.S. alternate delegate to the U.N. General Assembly, where she worked closely with the country's U.N. ambassador, Eleanor Roosevelt.

On the '49 world tour, through interactions with a broad spectrum of people in western Europe, the Middle East, India, and Pacific countries, Sampson concluded that "people were pretty much the same: all sought peace, happiness, and security." The seminar advanced her to the front line through the East and Far East, for in those areas people had had "little or no contact with an American Negro woman. I found," Sampson reported, "women throughout the world eager to know about Negro women," especially those in Pakistan, India, and Japan. At each capital visited, the Town Hall Seminar held a Round Table on the theme, "Peace with Individual Freedom and Well Being." Sampson participated in those originating in Paris; Berlin; either Istanbul or Ankara, Turkey; New Delhi; and Manila. She also held forth in a Round Table from Honolulu. "On each and every occasion, the name of the National Council of Negro Women was 'spelled out,' thereby giving information throughout these countries about the work of our organization," she informed council sisters. The discussions were broadcast in the states over the ABC radio network.[55] American embassy reports from countries that the seminar visited complimented it. All reports emphasized that the seminar benefitted greatly from the two African American members, Sampson and Walter White.[56] Seminar director Chester S. Williams conveyed some understanding of Sampson's contribution in this letter to Bethune on August 12, 1949.

Dear friend Mary:

While waiting here in the Karachi airport for the plane to Delhi, I thought I would drop you a note about Edith Sampson before my vivid impressions might be blurred. From the beginning she has been a terrific member of our group. Everybody loves her and is delighted to have such a fine-spirited woman as a companion of this tour. At various times along the way she has risen to the occasion with just the right note and important expressions of the views of Negro women.

In Berlin she was such a good sport that she struggled through a broadcast in German with Mrs. [J. Blair] Buck of the General Federation [of Women's Clubs] and Miss [Anna Lord] Strauss of the League of Women Voters as the guest of a leading women broadcast, a Frau Leber--and she answered the [Paul] Robeson line [that the U.S. had oppressed blacks but the Soviet Union had raised them to "the full dignity of mankind"] with a sweet-spirited remark appreciating his [Robeson's] cultural accomplishments and pointing out that on political matters he spoke only for himself--while she could speak for a membership of 800,000 Negro women.

I could recite many instances to show how important to our general cause of expanding democracy in the world the presence of Edith on this tour is, but I wanted to mention just one today. I was not at a meeting of Pakistan women's groups with the leaders of our women's organizations. . . but ever since lunch time I have heard nothing but excited appreciation for what Edith did. First, she responded to a question about Negroes in America by giving a sincere statement of her own struggles and the life of Mary Bethune as evidence of both the difficulties and the opportunities in America. She so impressed the Pakistan women leaders there that they expressed the desire to pay her way 'round the world as a gift of appreciation for her visit. She did not turn it down in a flustered way, but with wonderful courtesy, knowing that a gift is not to be rejected in the East, accepted it and then asked the ladies to do her the honor of accepting the same amount from her for their social service work in Pakistan. In addition to that she invited them to become honorary members of the Council [NCNW], which they accepted, embracing her with tears in their eyes.

I can't begin to tell you what it means to me to have Edith

> with us. And I believe that it is doing a vast amount of good for the Negro women of America and for the country we all love and want to make as fine as we can. I wish we might have had you with us, but you must know that Edith has been a wonderful second choice. Best of health to you.
>
> Much love to you.
>
> Chester [signed]
> Chester S. Williams
> Director, World Town Hall Seminar [57]

Domestic Issues

While NCNW officers kept before the membership foreign concerns, the organization remained focused on domestic issues. The 1947 Convention vowed support for the report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights. Additionally, it adopted its own program, which, in a widely-disseminated brochure, was presented as TEN POINTS OF OUR PROGRAM. Two were directed at global matters--the U.N. and world food conservation; the other eight, domestic ones. The primary focus of the domestic points was in keeping with the thrust of the organization from its beginning: to influence the federal government to act so as to alleviate the segregation and discrimination African Americans routinely experienced. The importance of government to the NCNW program was critical. "We discovered that Government is our bureau drawer," ran a statement in the 1946 Convention findings. "We must reach in and get the things we want. We resolved to make it a habit to phone or write our local government agencies for help, and to write to our national government." At its annual meeting, the program routinely included workshops discussing housing, health, employment and other vital issues as they related to blacks.[58]

The NCNW utilized several methods to implement program objectives. Among them were efforts to inform the public, especially through the work of local councils, so as to create public support for its view on a given issue; to stimulate local councils to develop programs meeting local needs, such as adult illiteracy, using how-to guidelines; to encourage a particular population to exercise options, especially voting; and to ally with other organizations to achieve a common goal, as in promoting child care centers. But, primarily, council efforts were directed towards petitioning federal officials for action, whether through testimony at a Congressional hearing, letters, news releases, speeches, or conferences.

As an illustration of petitioning government, the council dispatched from its 1946 annual convention a delegation of eight women, led by attorney Eunice Hunton Carter of New York, to lay its concerns before Joseph Martin of Massachusetts, the House Republican Leader. The delegates sought a National Health Act with proper safeguards to insure impartial administration; a Fair Employment Practices Committee bill "unhampered by local restrictions and qualifications"--Congress had failed to re-authorize the old FEPC; an Anti-Poll Tax Law; and equal educational facilities. The same convention authorized letters sent to the President and the Secretary of Labor commending them for eliminating segregation in the Washington office of the U.S. Employment Service, and requesting that this service remain in the Department of Labor, as opposed to its reputed transfer to the Social Security Board. The council believed that the Labor Department could establish policies which maintained that "workers should be placed according to their highest skill." Apparently, the Social Security Board would not.[59]

One of the council's TEN POINTS OF OUR PROGRAM was "youth conservation." This meant "increased participation of Negro youth in the normal life of the nation, full integration of Negro women in the Women's Army Corps and general abolition of segregation and discrimination." Since the NCNW had been associated with the WAC from its 1942 beginning and had long advocated desegregation, and since the WAC became a part of the regular army in 1948, this assertion probably was meant to convey NCNW's close identification with the corps and that it stood for desegregation of the entire military, a hot issue at the time. Going beyond this brochure's summary statement, by late 1948 youth conservation involved "organizing girls and young women between the ages of 16 and 21 years as 'Junior Councilers' for the purposes of aiding in the fight for the prevention of juvenile delinquency and for the training of young women for future community leadership." This program was something new, but by 1951, the NCNW *Yearbook* indicated eighteen groups of "Junior Councilers."[60]

Aside from "youth conservation," another program point, was advocacy of "Increased benefits under Social Security covering domestic workers and agricultural workers." From the beginning of the council, it recognized that most women it claimed to represent needed this. In 1946, its position was as plain as ever: "Because of the majority of Negro women workers are household service and agricultural workers who do not receive the benefits of Social Security legislation (Unemployment Compensation and Federal Old Age and Survivors' Insurance), we will press for the inclusion of these workers in such legislation, and will encourage them to organize as have other workers."[61]

Improved health care was always a NCNW goal. According to its brochure, it wanted "Action for extension of public health services on local and national levels." Its 1948 "Findings and Recommendations" declared, "to help meet the increasing and often burdensome costs of medical care--especially among Negro people whose incomes are too low to assure a reserve to cover unexpected illnesses and who do not have adequate health and medical facilities available to them including hospitals and trained personnel--the National Council of Negro Women wholeheartedly supports a national health program, the core of which is National Health Insurance." The next year, the NCNW reiterated its support for President Truman's National Health Program. Additionally, it decided to study health issues and to cooperate and coordinate efforts with "organizations sponsoring improved health for all people."[62]

While youth conservation, extension of Social Security benefits, and health care were items on the council's "TEN POINTS OF OUR PROGRAM," the top five points dealt with voting, housing, anti-lynching, education, and employment. These five advocacies are stated below in the order and phrasing appearing in the council brochure, with representative council action and commentary on them. While NCNW methods to achieve these points were important consciousness-raising endeavors, dramatic change came primarily when methods emanating from other sources directly engaged the black masses in the 1960's. Most of the council's views on the problems itemized below paralleled those of the NAACP and other black mainstream and male-dominated organizations. But without the council, women leaders throughout the country would not have been as alert and as mobilized in behalf of the stated objectives.

1. Removal of all voting restrictions in all elections, including primaries.

One impediment to voting that the NCNW actively tried to remove was the poll tax, for it mocked the concept of representative government. In 1940, when the National Committee to Abolish the Poll Tax was formed, Mary McLeod Bethune was among more than fifty personages sponsoring it, and her National Council joined in the struggle for poll tax relief. Like many other civil right measures proposed during Bethune's time, the objective of the committee went unrealized until the 1960's. In that decade, the 24th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution banned a tax for voting in federal elections. Until then, the NCNW advocated that citizens in those Southern states requiring a poll tax pay it. Voting warranted that.

Besides the poll tax, southern states used other stratagems to keep poor whites and African Americans from voting, although federal courts progressively struck some down. Nevertheless, wholesale black voting in some southern states failed to occur until after the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Nonetheless, in the post-war era the NCNW urged its Southern and Northern members to vote, if at all possible. At other times it told them to make wise voting choices. It never declared that one party was preferable to the other, for officially it was non-partisan and its members and constituents included Democrats and Republicans. "We insist upon the right to vote in every state, unrestricted by poll taxes, white primaries, or lily-white party conventions, the gerrymandering of districts, or any other device designated to disfranchise Negroes and other voters," read one NCNW statement on voting prior to the '44 Presidential Election. Under NAACP aegis, the National Council of Negro Women had joined twenty-five other aggregations--led by labor, fraternities and sororities, churches, and an assortment of others, including NCNW affiliate, the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses--to sign "A Declaration of Negro Voters," which included the above quote. Later, at its convention, the council called on members to make an all-out effort to register and vote in the impending election, regardless of party and distributed to them a pamphlet urging the same. Also, it advocated a federal ballot for soldiers. Two years later, it announced a little more. "Our obligation is two-fold: to vote at every opportunity; and to follow-through after elections, telling our elected officials, especially our Washington representatives, what our needs are."

Furthermore, as the 1948 Convention Findings reveal, the NCNW directed local affiliates to stimulate voting in their communities.[63]

In the 1940's, less that 13 percent of black women voted. Obviously, a part of the "removal of all voting restrictions," to which the NCNW aspired, involved accustoming them to vote, especially those who had relocated from the South. Black candidates, women candidates, and blacks on the campaign circuit helped to do that. No doubt this "accustoming process" started for some New Yorkers in 1944 when NCNW member Sara Pelham Speaks ran for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, the first black woman to do so. President Bethune "rose from a sick bed . . . long enough to write a hearty endorsement" for her candidacy. Bethune believed that through Speaks, the council had "taken a definite step forward in the affairs of our Government" and that "wider doors of opportunity may be opened to Negro women everywhere." When Speaks lost, the *New York Amsterdam News* went prophetic: "The old precedent has been broken and the way opened for a Congresswoman from the ranks of Negro women. The future holds that."[64]

Two years later, perhaps Bethune thought of Speaks when, under the auspices of the Los Angles NCNW affiliate, she "thrilled a large and enthusiastic audience, most of whom were women, at People's Independent Church of Christ." Probably, the most "thrilling" moment came when the National Council President declared, "I am expecting to see some brown women like you walking into Congress some day. Why not?" Previously, she had announced, "We have always sent our men forward. The time has come now when more women will come forward; the time is approaching when there will be women mayors, governors; when there will be more women on our Boards of Education. We elect the men to various offices. We might just as well elect ourselves."

Bethune exhorted her listeners to vote emphatically. ""Realize what the franchise means. If every woman would register, would vote, we could send the right kind of Senators and Congresswomen to Washington--the right kind of men who would help work on the problems down there in Georgia, Florida and in the deep South." This NCNW Leader, gave these Californians also an urgent purpose for voting in the next election. "I hope, particularly, that the womanhood of California will put everything it has under heaven to keep Helen Gahagan Douglas in Congress," she said. Two years earlier, the glamorous Douglass had won election from the Fourteenth Congressional District, which had a 25 percent black population and embraced the core of downtown Los Angeles. As far as Bethune and Douglas' black constituency were concerned, she had proven to be "the right kind" in Congress.[65]

2. *Enactment of legislation outlawing restrictive covenants and other devices which conspire to perpetuate discrimination and segregation in housing.*

On December 12, 1945, when Mary Bethune represented the National Council of Negro Women before a Congressional Committee on the Wagner-Ellender-Taft general housing bill, among the things she pointed out were the enormous need for decent housing among rural Americans and African Americans, the necessity for anti-discrimination provisions, and the track records of two housing agencies. Bethune was gratified that the bill encompassed housing for rural Americans. "Decent homes for the tenants, the sharecroppers, the migrant farm laborers, and the poorer farmer will truly be a profitable investment in America's future," she asserted. She observed that considering the thousands of African American families that had migrated from the South during the war, and, as a group, were then living in "veritable slum ghettos" from coast to coast, that the proposed housing bill was entirely "too timid for the courageous and pioneering spirit of America." She desired a measure that could do much more. Additionally, she wanted it to include "a sweeping clause which would require that wherever Federal funds, powers, or instruments are utilized to guarantee, aid, or subsidize slum clearance or housing development, the benefits of the bill be extended in accordance with need and economic qualifications and without regard to race, creed, color, religious or political affiliation." Bethune took a moment also to commend the Public Housing Administration, stating that it "has been a bright light in the whole dreary picture of housing available to Negroes during the past ten years. It stands in startling contrast," she declared, "with the irresponsible and vicious practices of the Federal Housing Administration [FHA], which has not only failed to contribute toward the solution of the housing problems that face Negroes, but has actually intensified these problems." For the diplomatic Bethune, that was strong language indeed.

In 1947, the council had focused primarily on housing from the viewpoint of anti-discrimination, especially by banning restrictive covenants, which prevented owners of property from selling or renting to those thought undesirable, especially people of color. In May 1948, when the U.S. Supreme Count determined that these covenants were unenforceable in a court of law, the council still saw much to do in dealing with housing discrimination. "We realize that the task is not yet finished," it announced about five months after the decision. "We call upon persons of goodwill everywhere to work to create a public opinion which will not breed gentlemen's agreements but will create a climate in which all persons have equal access to the housing market and enjoy the privilege of living and moving freely throughout the community without restrictions based on race, creed, or color."[66]

3. *Enactment by Congress of an anti-lynching bill which provides heavy prison terms and fines for mobsters or conspiring state officers.*

"In the year 1947, lynching remains one of the most serious threats to the civil rights of Americans. It is still possible for a mob to abduct and murder a person in some sections of the country with almost certain assurance of escaping punishment for the crime," declared the President's Committee on Civil Rights in its influential report, "To Secure These Rights." "The communities in which lynchings occur tend to condone the crime. Punishment of lynchers is not accepted as the responsibility of state or local governments in the communities," the report maintained. "Frequently, state officials participate in the crime, actively or passively. Federal efforts to punish the crime are resisted." The report gave interesting specifics.

> In 1946 at least six persons in the United States were lynched by mobs. Three of them had not been charged, either by the police or anyone else, with an offense. Of the three that had been charged, one had been accused of stealing a saddle. (The real thieves were discovered after the lynching.) Another was said to have broken into a house. A third was charged with stabbing a man. All were Negroes.

Since the 1920's the NAACP had endeavored to get Congress to pass an anti-lynching bill. It did not. When an anti-lynch proposal was introduced, Southerners filibustered it to death. Many, including the NCNW, wanted Congress to change its rules so as to avoid the filibuster, but to no avail. The NAACP continued to investigate lynchings and to urge the national government to act. Other than that, about all it and other allies could do, was to keep the issue before the public, for as the President's Committee reported, "Civil rights. . . . will never be adequately protected until the intelligent will of the American people approves and demands that protection." The NCNW continued to work with the NAACP on lynching and other matters, as in December 1946. The next year, it reported on, and presumably participated in, a Washington rally "to dramatize the efforts to stop lynching." The hugely talented Paul Robeson, actor and singer, railed against the pro-lynching Senator Theodore Bilbo of Mississippi and revved up the faithful to fight on. He sang three spirituals spontaneously and unaccompanied, and ended dramatically with the final speech from Shakespeare's *Othello.*[67]

4. *Enactment of a Federal aid to education bill with adequate safeguards prohibiting discrimination in administration and allocation of funds.*

Just as the NCNW's position on lynching was unchanged from the previous decade, it remained the same on federal aid to education too. In 1937, the organization had gone before a Congressional Committee asking for federal aid to education, as long as equitable benefits to African Americans were guaranteed. Without these guarantees, the NCNW didn't want the aid. On January 31, 1945, through President Mary McLeod Bethune, it testified before another Senate Committee urging the same, but adding that such aid benefitted the country because, as the war had highlighted, it would make more people eligible for military service and for jobs in industry. Four years later the organization vowed to "take vigorous action in support of Federal Aid to Education by informing the public of the pressing needs in education, of the effects of inadequate educational institutions and in standards of cooperation with educational organizations striving to secure better educational resources in all communities."

In the postwar period in particular, the South altered some racist educational practices. But whatever it did resulted from the pressure exerted by federal courts or the fear of it. Consequently, it spent more in the late 1940's on the education of a black child, but it was only one-third as much as the white child. "With notable exceptions, the liberal and educated South has not taken any leading role in Negro progress," scholar W.E.B. DuBois wrote in 1949, because "the progressive white South is not yet ready to attack race discrimination. . . . It is not simply because they know that the unlettered crowd opposes this democracy: they themselves, as modern, educated men, oppose such a program. But they are not prepared to proclaim this reactionary belief," he concluded, "and prefer to base their opposition to civil rights on the right of states . . ." While the "progressive white South" did not budge, national and world public opinion moved on to the position that equality demanded the abolition of separate schools. To an extent, this would come dramatically in the 1960's, as would federal aid to elementary and secondary schools. While the NCNW wanted desegregation, in the late '40's, it worked towards equitable federal assistance to public schools.[68]

5. *Enactment of legislation to outlaw discrimination in employment because of race, creed, color or national origin, improved minimum wage and working standards, establishment of a workers' educational bureau in the Federal Department of Labor.*

The Fair Employment Practices Committee, which African Americans had pressured the Roosevelt Administration to create in 1941, was the primary means through which the NCNW hoped to enhance the employment of African Americans. Since the committee was a temporary defense measure, the council had early become a staunch member of the National Committee for a Permanent FEPC, for which council member Anna A. Hedgeman was executive director. In late 1944, Bethune worked with a special committee on F.E.P.C., involving the White House and the Attorney General's Office, to insure that the fair employment program was not sabotaged. On July 8, 1945, she addressed a mass meeting on the Washington Monument Grounds in support of the FEPC, saying "We are not asking, but are demanding and requiring," Congress refused to budge.

In 1947, President Harry Truman made the revival of a FEPC a part of his legislative agenda to secure the rights of minorities. Two years later, an FEPC bill was still in Congress. On May 20, 1949, Mary Bethune testified before the House Committee on Education and Labor in behalf of this bill to prohibit discrimination in employment as one, she said, of nearly 15 million African Americans who suffered from discrimination. "How long, in the name of American fair play," she asked rhetorically, "can we ignore these discriminations, particularly the denial of the right to work at one's highest capacity and capabilities?" The NCNW President met head-on the arguments against the bill. Some declared that prejudice cannot be legislated away. She agreed, arguing, "but one of the resulting effects of prejudice--discrimination . . . --can be outlawed; just as we outlaw the resulting effect of malice and hate and greed and jealousies. Laws against murder," she stated, "prohibit the taking away of life. An FEPC [Fair Employment Practices Committee] law would prohibit the taking away of one's livelihood because of his race, creed, color, national origin or ancestry." Also, Bethune countered the argument that government has no right to tell an employer who to hire. She agreed with that too, explaining that the law would not "say who an employer must hire or who a union must accept. It merely states that neither employer nor union can base refusal to hire or to accept an otherwise qualified applicant because of his race, creed, color, national origin or ancestry."

Bethune appealed to the evidence of recent history and the post-war world in behalf of a no-discrimination employment bill. During World War II, the percentage of African Americans in war industries rose from 3 percent in 1940 to 7.7 percent in '44 for various reasons. "But a large part of it," she insisted, "was due to the establishment and the efforts of the wartime FEPC.

. ." She believed that a bill was needed in 1949 not only because it was right, but because the world was watching--"the 60 to 70 percent of the world's people who are colored," she said. These were the people that the Communist propaganda machine targeted with the message that American democracy was a fantasy, something not implemented at home and, therefore, not to be implemented abroad, she averred. Unsurprisingly, she reiterated before the Committee strong reasons for a new FEPC, but prejudice and politics continued to rule the day, not morality nor logic.

Six months later, the NCNW Conference resolutions framed the issue of fair employment practices in terms of women's lack of opportunity in the work force. The NCNW pledged to continue publicizing the facts of discrimination and to keep working for "legislation establishing equal pay for equal work." It would advocate the entry of more professional women in public service and private industry, despite the obstacles that had to be overcome. Also, it endorsed the work of the Jeanes Fund Program and the federal government for the improvement of "conditions of work, living, and agricultural development in rural areas designed to improve general conditions of rural women and their families."[69]

Notes

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2. *Ibid*., 141-145; Marjorie McKenzie [Lawson], "Pursuit of Democracy [column], *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 24, 1944, 7; TELEFACT [Newsletter of the NCNW], October-November 1944, 3.

3. Interview with Estelle Massy Riddle, June 14, 1946, Radio Station WMCA, NCNW Vertical File, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York; 1946 Findings.

4. Bethune to Council Member, January 28, 1947, Nannie Helen Burroughs Papers,

Number 3, Library of Congress; Alice Dunnigan to Claude A. Barnett, February 8, 1947, Claude A. Barnett Papers, Bethune File, Chicago Historical Society; "Bethune's Position Called Inconsistent," *Alabama Tribune* [Montgomery], February 14, 1947, 4; "Katherine Shryer, New Council Sec'y," *The Chronicle* [Detroit], September 9, 1946, Tuskegee Institute Newspaper Clippings; Joyce Ann Hanson, "The Ties that Bind: Mary McLeod Bethune and the Political Mobilization of Women," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1997), 195-197.

5. Bethune, Progress Report, November 15, 1947-April 15, 1948, April 17, 1948, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 3, Folder 37; Bethune, Annual Report of the NCNW President, October 29, 1945, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 2, Folder 24.

6. Bethune, "Stepping Aside . . . at Seventy-four," October 1949, in *Mary McLeod Bethune: Building a Better World*, Audrey Thomas McCluskey and Elaine M. Smith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 192-193.

7. NCNW 1940 Minutes, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 1, Folder 7; Findings of the NCNW in Meeting, Thursday, October 25, 1940, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 1, Series 8.

8.Bethune quoted from the *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 1, 1941, 9.

9. NCNW Minutes, Board of Directors Meeting, December 18, 1943, NCNW Papers, Series 3, Box 1, Folder 1.

10. Susan McElrath, Notes on Tour of Council House with Jeanetta Welch Brown, July 10, 1992, Bethune Council House, Office of the Cultural Resource Specialist; John Salmond, A Southern Rebel: *The Life and Times of Aubrey Willis Williams, 1890-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 197.

11. Historic American Buildings Survey, 1318 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C., HABS NO. DC-775, 6; McElrath, on Tour with J.W. Brown.

12. NCNW Minutes, Directors Meeting, December 18, 1943; *Aframerican Woman's Journal*, (Spring 1944), 3. This first NCNW group photo in Council House appears again in *Women United: Souvenir Year Book*, ed., Ruth Caston Mueller (NCNW: 1951), 24; Bethune, diary entry for November 21, 1950, BF, Part 1, Reel 5.

13. Building Survey, 9.

14. McElrath, on Tour with J.W. Brown.

15. Building Survey, 14; Bethune to J.W. Brown, August 23, 1944, NCNW Papers, Series 5, Box 5, Folder 93; for a dedication photograph, see, for example, a back view of Bethune speaking and a front view of the audience, NCNW Papers, Series 14, Box 5, Folder 12.

16. Printed Program, Dedication of Council House, October 15, 1944, BF, Part 1, Reel 15; "The Final Chapter [in the Workshop]: Dedication of National Headquarters,"*Aframerican Woman's Journal*, (1944 Convention Issue), 6.

17. Bethune to T.A. Adams, October 17, 1944, NCNW Papers, Series 5, Box 1, Folder 4.

18. NCNW 1945-1946 Activities Calender of Events, NCNW Papers, Series 5, Box 1, Folder 11; Federal Bureau of Investigation Cross Reference File on Mary McLeod Bethune; TELEFACT, January 1947, 2; *Washington Afro-American*, November 10, 1945, 14.

19. NCNW 1945-1946 Activities Calender of Events; *Washington Afro-American*, January 20, 1945, 9; NCNW House Committee Annual Report, November 1949, BCH, Series 4, Box 7, Folder 47.

20. NCNW 12th Annual Convention Program, November 10-14, 1947, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 3, Folder 35; NCNW 1949 House Committee Report.

21. Estelle Massy Riddle [Osborne] Interview, June 14, 1946; NCNW 1949 House Committee Report.

22. Report of the National Library and Museum Committee, [1949], NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 3, Folder 42; Findings of the NCNW 1946 Convention, November 13-16, 1946, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 2, Folder 28.

23. "Mrs. Bethune Declares Council Meet Best Yet," *Atlanta Daily World*, November 8, 1944, Tuskegee Institute Newspapers Clippings.

24. NCNW 1949 House Committee Report.

25. Bethune, Annual Report of the President and Executive Secretary, 1943-1944, October 1944, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 2, Folder 22; Bethune, Memorandum to Mrs. Harold V. Milligan, 1946, in *Bethune: Building a Better World*, ed. McCluskey and Smith, 183.

26. Virginia F. Durr Papers, Awards , 1946-83, LPR, 28, Container 4, Folder 5, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery.

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28. Invitation to participate in honoring outstanding women on February 10, 1945, NCNW Papers, Series 5, Box 16, Folder 6.

29. Pearl B. Cox, "You Don't Know Your Washington . . .Unless You've Met Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, *Black and White*, 7 (May 1945), 13-14; *Aframerican Woman's Journal*, March 1945, 16-17; Mable Alston, "500 Attend Reception Given for National Council Honorees," *Washington Afro-American*, February 17, 1945, 11; "Mrs. Bethune Names Leading Women of Year," Chicago Defender, [undated], Bethune Vertical File, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center.

30. First NCNW Group Photo in Council House, in *Women United: Souvenir Year Book*, ed., Ruth Caston Mueller (NCNW: 1951), 24.

31. Photo of Bethune in the Council House Reception Room, *Aframerican Woman's Journal*, (March 1945), 17.

32. Ellen M. Plante, *The Victorian Home: The Grandeur and Comfort of the Victorian Era in Households Past and Present* (Philadelphia: Courage Books, 1995), 20-51 ("The Proper Parlor"); Building Survey, 14; Bethune to T.A. Adams, November 15, 1944.

33. Dan Williams,"Portrait of Mary Bethune: The Cotton-Picker Still Sings," *Washington Post*, June 2, 1946, Tuskegee Institute Newspaper Clippings.

34. Photo accompanying "My Secret Talks with FDR," *Ebony*, 4 (March 1949), 51.

35. Photo Number 952, NCNW Papers, Series 14, Box 3.

36. Cover, *Aframerican Woman's Journal*, (Winter 1947-1948), NCNW Papers.

37. Genevieve Forbes Herrick, "Loved, Feared, and Followed," *Collier's*, September 23, 1950, Bethune File, FDR Memorial Foundation, FDR Library, Hyde Park, New York; Bethune's 1950 Diary, BF, Part 1, Reel 5.

38. Photo accompanying "Women Leaders," *Ebony*, 4 (July 1949), 22; Inventory of Artifacts, Cultural Historian's Office, Bethune Council House.

39. *Ebony*, "Women Leaders," 22.

40. Photograph accompanying Monique Greenwood, "Mary McLeod Bethune Slept Here," *Essence* (February 1998), 149, Bethune Vertical File, Bethune Council House.

41. Minutes of NCNW Conference, March 24, 1945, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, [Probably under social], FDR Library.) Be to Sadie Alexander, February 24, 1948, NCNW Papers, Series 5, Box 2, Folder 8;Bethune to Sue B. Thurman, March 23, 1948, BF, Part 1, Reel 14; Bethune to Elizabeth Eastman, Oct. 25, 1948, BF, Part 2, Reel 4.

42. October 11, 1948 Minutes of Regional Meeting, at YMCA in New York. NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 3, Folder 41-Bethune talked of In *Aframerican Woman's Journal* (1948-1949), 26. Bethune discussed her "Dream House" headquarters at a "Women United" Luncheon in St. Louis, Mo.

43. Steven M. Kay (Alabama Historical Commission's Cultural Resources Coordinator) to the Author, November 8, 1988. Kay's assessment was based upon a photograph of the building supplied by the Author. Be to Mary Waring ;

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45. Frances Diehl to Bethune, undated, NCNW Papers, Series 5, Box 24, Folder 365; Frances Diehl to Bethune, July 15, 1947, NCNW Papers, Series 5, Box 24, Folder 367; Chapter Reports, [1947-48], Series 2, Box 3, Folder 41; NCNW Papers, Sue Bailey Thurman, "Behind the Scenes at San Francisco," *Aframerican Woman's Journal*, (June 1945), 4-5.

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52. Findings of the [NCNW] Convention, November 1946. Quote from Toki Schalk,

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53. George V. Allen [Assistant Secretary of State] to Bethune, NCNW Papers, Series 5, Box 1, Folder 10; Bethune to Dr. Hall, September 26, 1949, BF, Part 2, Reel 1; Bethune, Progress Report, November 15, 1947-April 15, 1948, April 17, 1948, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 3, Folder 37.

54. Eunice H. Carter, "Following the U.N." in *Women United, Souvenir Year Book*, ed. Ruth Caston Mueller, 60-61.

55. Edith Sampson, NCNW Annual Report of the Chairman of the Executive Committee, [March 1949] NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 4, Folder 47; Edith Sampson, "We Saw the World," in *Women United, Souvenir Year Book*, ed. Ruth Caston Mueller, 54-55; Bethune to Era Bell Thompson, December 6, 1950, BF, Part 3, Reel 33.

56. Chester S. Williams to Bethune, October 6, 1949, BF, Part 2, Reel 12.

57. Chester S. Williams to Bethune, August 12, 1949, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, 1945-1952, Number 3259, FDR Library.

58. Resolutions of the NCNW 1947 Convention, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 2, Folder 33; NCNW Brochure [1948], National Council of Negro Women Vertical File, Alabama State University Learning Center, Special Collections; NCNW Resolutions Passed at the 11th Annual Convention, November 11-15, 1946, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 2, Folder 28.

59. Bessie H. Trice, "Women Prepare to Fight for Liberal Legislation," *Pittsburgh Courier*, [1946], 8, BF; NCNW Resolutions, 1946.

60. NCNW Findings and Recommendations of the Thirteenth Annual Convention, October 10-13, 1948, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 3, Folder 41; NCNW *Souvenir Year Book*, 106-107.

61. NCNW Resolutions, 1946.

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65. LeRoy S. Hart, "Dr Bethune Urges Women to Stress Government Activity," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 18, 1946, Scrapbook, BF; Ingrid Winther Scobie, "Helen Gahagan Douglas," in *Portraits of American Women: From Settlement to the Present*, ed., G.J. Barker-Benfield and Catherine Clinton (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 561-579.

66. Bethune, Statement before the Senate Banking and Currency Committee on S. 1592, in *Bethune: Building a Better World*, McCluskey and Smith, 178-182; NCNW 1948 Convention Findings.

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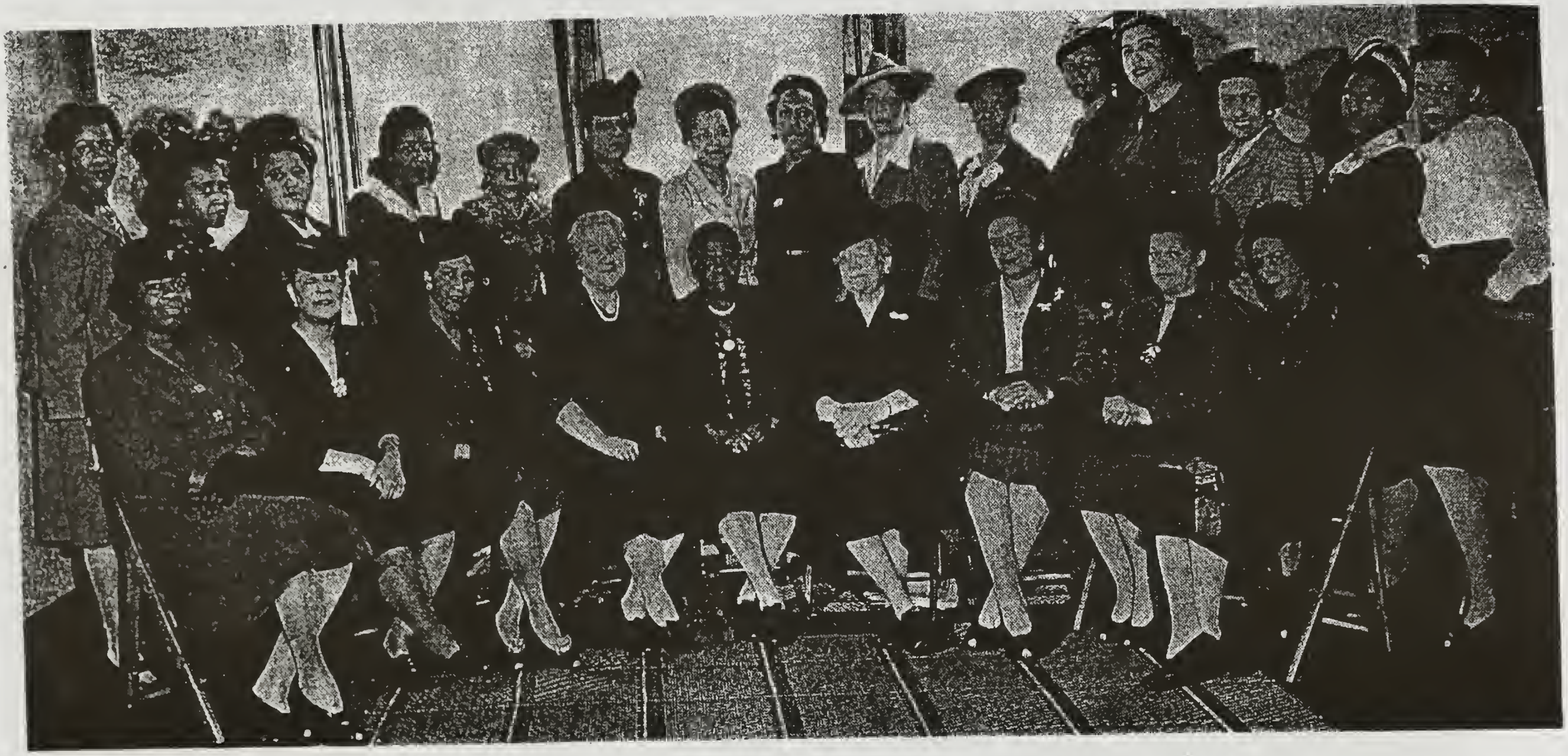
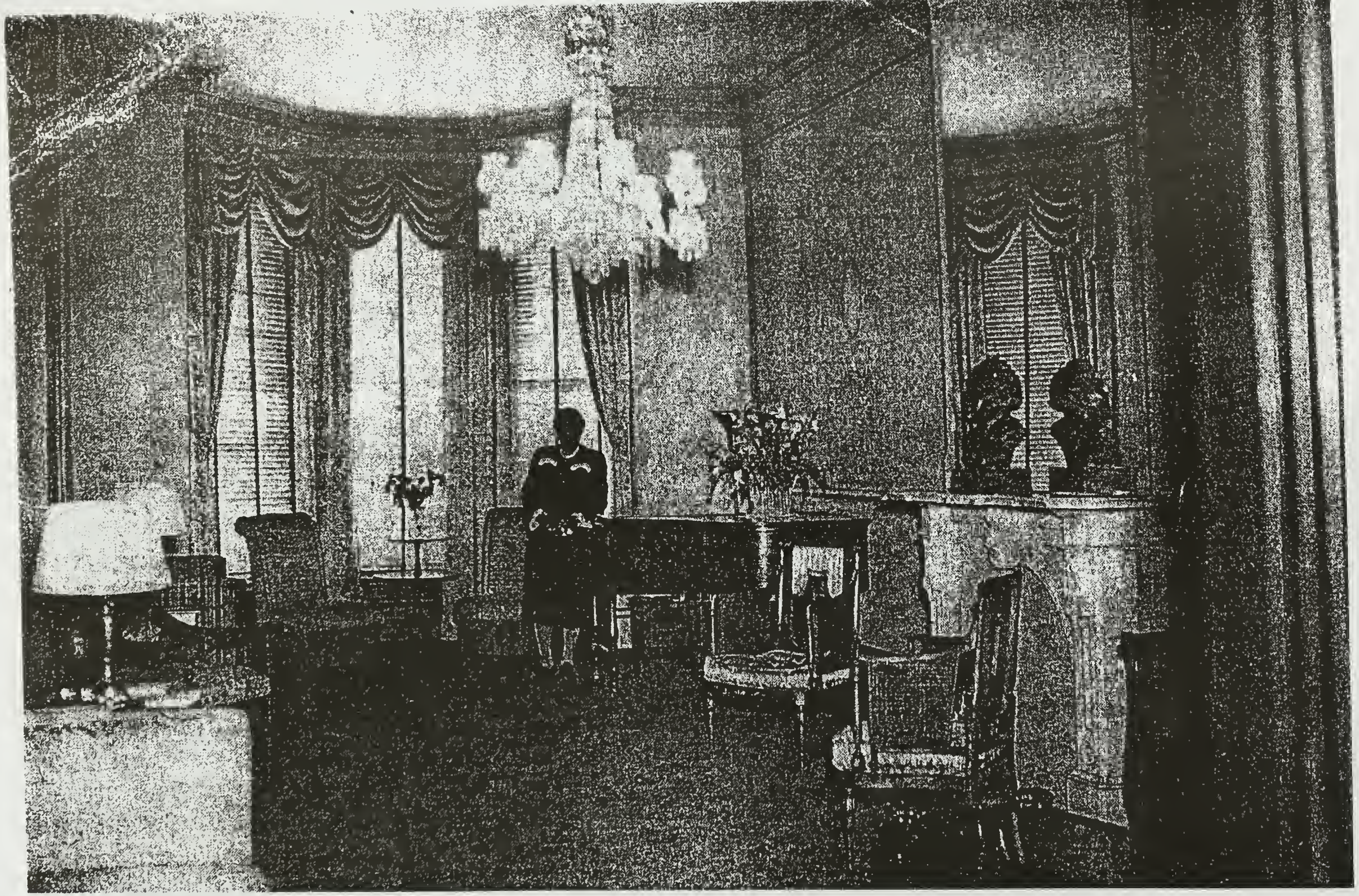
69. TELEFACT, December 1944, 4; FBI Cross Reference File on Mary McLeod Bethune; Bethune, Statement of Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune Before the Committee on Education and Labor of the House of Representatives, May 20, 1949, in support of Legislation to Prohibit Discrimination in Employment Because of Race, Color, Religion, National Origin or Ancestry, BF; NCNW Reports of Resolution Committee, November 18, 1949.



FIRST NCNW GROUP PHOTOGRAPH IN COUNCIL HOUSE. Meeting on December 18, 1943, these women approved the purchase of the NCNW headquarters building, located in Washington, D.C. Front row (left to right): Rosa Gragg, Detroit; Eleanor Curtis Dailey, Chicago; Ethel Ramos Harris, New Konskington, Pa; Harriet Curtis Hall, Boston; Mary McLeod Bethune, NCNW President; Christine Smith, Detroit; Audley Moore, New York; Gertrude Robinson, N.Y.; Sue Bailey Thurman, Washington, D.C. Back Row (left to right): Edna Browne, D.C.; Helen Harden, N.Y.; Marjorie S. Joyner, Chicago; Bertie Derrick, D.C; Elsie Austin, D.C; Eunice H. Carter, N.Y.; Sadie Alexander, Philadelphia; Edith Sampson, Chicago; Dorothy Ferebee, D.C; Marion Seymour, D.C; Julia Pate Borders, Atlanta; Venice Spraggs, D.C; Jeanetta W. Brown, D.C; Hilda V. Grayson, D.C; and Julia Snead, D.C. The attorneys in the group were Elsie Austin, Eunice Carter, Sadie Alexander and Edith Sampson.

NCNW *Women United Souvenir Year Book*



MARY MCLEOD BETHUNE IN THE COUNCIL HOUSE RECEPTION ROOM. In the NCNW's 1875 Second Empire styled townhouse in Washington, D.C., President Mary McLeod Bethune surveys the room that exudes the ambience of a Victorian parlor. It has lofty ceilings above distinctive molding, a medallion-centered crystal chandelier, a large mirror over the French marble mantel framing the fireplace, delicately decorated wallpaper extending to wainscoting, admirably corniced, swagged and draped bay windows, wall-to-wall floral carpeting, and fine furniture, including a baby grand piano, pedestal table, bottom-fringed chairs, other period chairs, and sofas in richly textured fabrics. In this early 1945 photograph, a Selma Burke bust of Mary Bethune graces the white mantel.

Aframerican Woman's Journal, March 1945

Chapter 5

Commendations and Moving On

As the 1940's turned into the 1950's and that decade unfolded, positive and negative agitation rocked the world. The ferment within many colonial countries for self-governance grew ever stronger. The Cold War turned hot in the "Korean Conflict." On the home front in 1952, with the country awash in conservatism, the Republican standard-bearers Dwight D. Eisenhower and Richard M. Nixon swept into office. White women moved forward with them. The new president appointed career diplomat Frances E. Willis as ambassador to Switzerland and Oveta Culp Hobby as Secretary of the newly created Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. By January 5, 1955, a record eighteen women had been elected to Congress, two to the Senate. It would take thirteen years before even one African American woman would be elected to the House of Representatives; thirty-seven, before one would reach the Senate. In the early 1950's, ebony women had to rely on assistant and consultant appointments for their government visibility. In the place of Democrat Anna Arnold Hedgeman, assistant to the director of the Federal Security Administration, the Republicans placed Jane Spaulding in its much coveted equivalency: assistant to the new HEW Secretary; and Roberta Church of Memphis, to the minority consultant spot in the Labor Department's Bureau of Employment Security, previously held by another sister of color, Thomasina Johnson-Norford.

While most black women continued their historical dual focus on home and work, mainstream women experienced a new version of the nineteenth century "Cult of True

Womanhood" in the form of the "feminine mystique," which told young wives to make their husbands and children the center of their lives. Even so, with little debate, white women increasingly worked outside the home. Generally, they were able to obtain good paying jobs, especially when compared to opportunities for women of color, who--mostly blocked from even factory work--increasingly accepted domestic employment from white women, who were both in and out of the labor force.[1]

On the racial front per se, the news was good and bad. The great migration of African Americans out of the deep South into the major cities of the North and West generally enhanced their options for a better life. Moreover, the federal judiciary's aggressive drive to extend civil rights in education culminated in the unanimous 1954 Supreme Court *Brown* versus *Board of Education* Decision, which reversed more than a half century of legally-sanctioned segregation based on race. But in contrast to President Harry Truman, President Eisenhower tended to ignore civil rights for 10 percent of Americans, or about 15 million people. Disapproving of the *Brown* decision, he did little to enforce it. In the "Declaration of Constitutional Principles," nearly the whole southern contingent in Congress denounced the decision and vowed to resist its implementation. Throughout the South, White Citizens' Councils mushroomed behind white privilege and its converse, "keeping the nigger down," "even though the black unemployment rate was twice that of whites, and the black poverty rate was a staggering 50 percent compared to 20 and 25 percent for whites." In 1955, the median black family income was $2,549; the medium white family income, $4,605. In that same year, Mississippi whites lynched Reverend George W. Lee for leading a voter registration drive, and two other blacks for unrelated reasons. The state reduced its number of registered black voters from 22,000 to 8,000. [2]

While Mary McLeod Bethune, age 74, still presided over the National Council of Negro Women in '49, Harry Truman occupied the U.S. presidency, and from its bully pulpit continued to encourage her and the NCNW in their common goals. In November of that year, however, Bethune would relinquish the council gavel, after directing the organization for fourteen years. The year marked a divide for her. Also, 1949 constituted a watershed for the National Council. Under new leadership the organization would advance after Bethune's retirement, by creating, for example, eight new chapters in four years. The council's roots had "gone too deeply down to be uprooted by the storms of handicap," just as Bethune prophesied. Besides, the Founder-President had mentored well younger women. In the 1950's, Harlem's Congressman Adam Clayton Powell declared, "There are hundreds of women who are now considered effective leaders who were influenced and encouraged by Mrs. Bethune. I might say they were tutored by her." He named as prime examples Edith Sampson, Dorothy Ferebee, Vivian Mason, Arenia Mallory, and Marjorie Stewart Joyner.[3]

Two in that group were Bethune's successors to the NCNW presidency. They were well-educated, experienced, cultured, and capable. As most leaders in the organization, both physician Dorothy B. Ferebee and administrator Vivian C. Mason were younger than Bethune, which their much greater energy demonstrated. Both were close to her personally, with Ferebee attending Bethune as her Washington physician. Besides, both could rely on Bethune's good name to booster their work, while at the same time, make their own decisions, such as incorporating into the organization's priorities their areas of expertise and selecting executive directors of their choice.

Yet, regardless of the good leadership of Mary Bethune, Dorothy Ferebee, and Vivian

Mason, the council still suffered from the absence of a tax-exempt status. Consequently, it could not attract big money in the form of foundation grants and government contracts. Certainly, the organization tried for years to win a tax-exempt status. But the Internal Revenue Service rejected application after application, even though the council claimed to be non-political and its manual read, "Participation in partisan politics on a national or local level is contrary to the policy of the organization." Tax-exemption would come only after nine years into the administration of the council's fourth president, with the organization having revised its Articles of Incorporation and expanded its educational and charitable endeavors. Therefore, in 1949 as previously and throughout the tenures of Mason and Ferebee, the NCNW would remain underfinanced. This caused one journalist to remark, "Compared with other national women's groups, such as one which has a staff of 70 persons and an annual budget of $125,000, its persistence and the devotion of its active membership seem rather remarkable."[4] Indeed it does. This division of the Historic Resource Study highlights the culmination of Bethune's NCNW presidential tenure, particularly at the '49 convention; surveys the organization from 1950 to 1955, the period during which Bethune still factored personally into most of its affairs; and offers an assessment of the council's significance from 1935 to 1955.

A Bethune Triumph

Mary McLeod Bethune never knew a year like 1949. It really got underway when she attended the inauguration of U. S. President Harry Truman, who, contrary to pre-election polls, had triumphed over New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey. "The Inauguration was historical; it was prophetic; it was unparalleled," Bethune rhapsodized to a friend. "I think the rays of democracy are beginning really to break through." The unprecedented participation of African Americans in the Inaugural merited such a comment.[5] The next month, Bethune attended the NCNW-sponsored concert at New York's Carnegie Hall featuring singer Carol Brice, backed by a group of international singers. The NCNW Chief spoke to the small audience there, probably thinking that should her organization sponsor another such gathering, the featured soloist would not have laryngitis and many more people would buy tickets.[6] Later in the month, Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida, near Orlando, having been won over by its president, Hamilton Holt, conferred upon Bethune a doctorate. While she had a string of them already, this one made her the first African American to receive an honorary degree from a Southern white institution. In March, this busy woman flew to Los Angeles, only to be surprised on national television by the "This Is Your Life" program, which had brought in her son and most devoted friends to honor her. Four were former students of her Daytona girls' school: Arabella Denniston, Charlotte Ford Clark, Sadie Franklin, and Lucy Miller Mitchell.[7] Bethune went to Capital Hill a couple of times in '49 to testify before Congressional Committees regarding pending legislation dealing with employment and a food additive.

Bethune's college threw a gala to celebrate her seventy-fourth birthday and with the consent of its Board of Trustees, later in the year Bethune occupied the pivotal position in a totally upscale college endowment campaign directed from New York's Madison Avenue.[8] From July 12th to the 27th she saw Haiti as the guest of President Dumarsais Estime's government and received its highest tribute--the first ever bestowed upon a woman--the Order of Honor and Merit. "The trip and the visit to Haiti," she exclaimed to a friend, was the most thrilling experience of my whole life. . . . the best part is that it [Haiti] is ruled by black people."[9]

Bethune presided over the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History at its annual meeting in New York , a post that she had occupied since '36.

And, Mary McLeod Bethune continued to reign over the NCNW. In January she conveyed to her friend Eleanor Roosevelt that she would retire in November, noting "I am trying to make it [the council] very solid and sound before turning it over to the women." She added, "It's influence is expanding every day. Our contacts are broadening and we are being called upon for sound judgment and leadership in a marvelous way."[10] To undergird its sagging finances, Bethune starting a high-powered fund-raising drive, headquartered in New York at 516 Fifth Avenue, Suite 408, and assigned Arabella Denniston to that location. Bethune informed her journalist intimate, Constance Daniel, "We want 500,000 women of all colors and creeds at $2.00 and $3.00 per woman per year to help us to put in action the program of civil and human rights." This "Membership Enlistment Campaign" didn't come close to its goal, just as Bethune's fund-raising for her college would not.[11] At this stage in her life Bethune couldn't parlay her tremendous personal popularity into big bucks for her most cherished institutions. But about her popularity, no doubt existed, as the NCNW's '49 Convention demonstrated. With the theme "Women United - Gateway to Democracy," the NCNW annual meeting that year boasted arresting features; namely, International Night, the presidential election, and the great Bethune banquet.

International Night[12]

In some ways, the NCNW International Night on Tuesday, November 15, 1949, appeared similar to those of the recent past. The Labor Department Auditorium, with "its green and gold interior decorations, soft carpets, rich furniture and drapes" was the venue for the affair, which began at 8:00 p.m. with the United States Navy Ensemble playing. Looking "queenly in her evening gown of black velvet with white orchids and halo of white hair," Mary McLeod Bethune presided. Although intimates declared her ill, nevertheless, she was "her charming, effusive self." Only a series of coughing spells hinted that something might be wrong. Many special guests attended, including representatives from the State Department, United Nations, National Citizens Committee for U. N. DAY, and more than thirty embassies and legations in Washington. Most foreign diplomats hailed from Europe or English-speaking countries, and then the Americas. But attending International Night also were representatives from China, Ethiopia, Iran, Israel, Liberia, and Syria. Most were introduced.

Bethune had planned the "International Night" of her dreams. Naturally, NCNW leaders were presented there. Phelps Stokes Fund Director Channing H. Tobias and Bethune's Washington pastor Robert Williams of Asbury Methodist Church offered prayers. The NCNW's own gifted Ethel Ramos Harris and Muriel Rahn rendered musical selections. Well-known internationalists Ralph Bunche of the United Nations and India's Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit brought greetings. "Echoes from Goodwill Ambassadors around the World," entailed statements from six women, beginning with Mrs. Eunice H. Carter, NCNW's Official Observer to the United Nations, and ending with Mrs. Edith Sampson, the NCNW representative to the World Town Hall Seminar and the seminar president. Speaking between them were Mrs. Oswald B. Lord, chair of the U.S. Committee for the U.N. International Children's Emergency Fund; Mrs. J. Blair Buck, President of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, Miss Anna Lord Strauss, president of the League of Women Voters, and Dr. Althea Hottel, president of the American Association of University Women.

In "Observance of the Fourth Anniversary of the United Nations," International Night '49, was like none other because the U.S. President spoke. An overflow crowd turned out to hear him. "Scores of detectives and uniformed police, both white and colored, swarmed around the building long before he appeared at the side entrance about 8:40 p.m." The motion picture cameras began rolling, bulbs flashed, and the spotlight went to the stage. Mrs. W.A. Scott of the *Atlanta World* confessed, "It was a thrill to see a PRESIDENT make his entrance--to say the least." Few African Americans had seen a U.S. President at one of their functions. Franklin Roosevelt wouldn't attend Bethune's *government-sponsored* national conferences in the late '30's, despite her begging and pleading. Just before Harry S. Truman spoke, Congressman William L. Dawson of Chicago said, "Ladies and Gentlemen, I present to you the President of the United States."

Truman addressed a most receptive audience. Managing to connect the history of the United States from thirteen colonies and sovereign states to a people united in one sovereign nation, he talked optimistically about the evening's theme, the United Nations and its place in the world. He observed that just as the U.S. constitution provides for a U.S. territory to enter the union as a state equal to any other, the United Nations was following that same principle in dealing with former colonial possessions through its trusteeship. Truman registered delight with the presence of U.N. Director of Trusteeship, Dr. Ralph Bunche, and the ambassador to the U.S. from a country recently emancipated from colonialism, Madame Pandit of India. Alluding to the U.N.'s "Declaration of Human Rights," the President stated that all present "have a deep interest in a great enterprise--the extension of freedom and opportunity to all our citizens without racial or religious discrimination. . . . We are going to continue to advance in our program of bringing equal rights and equal opportunities to all citizens. In that great cause there is no retreat and no retirement. . ."

Also, President Truman praised Bethune, remembering her work with Bethune-Cookman College, the National Youth Administration, and as a civic leader. "She has been in the forefront of those who worked for better housing and for larger employment opportunities through improved training and through the extension of fair employment practices," he announced. Speaking directly to her, the President declared, "Mrs. Bethune, as you retire from the presidency of this organization, I join with your members in thanking you for your leadership, which will forever be an inspiration to those who seek to carry forward the noble purposes to which your life has been devoted."[13]

After his address, Truman remained for the next portion of the program, the commendations. The sixteen NCNW leading lights who narrated reasons for presenting outstanding citizenship awards to recipients were Alice P. Allen of Birmingham; Elsie Austin, Marion Elliott, Venice Spraggs, and E. Buelah Winston, Washington; Mattie Coasey, Baltimore; Eleanor Curtis Dailey and Georgia Jones Ellis, Chicago; Daisy George and Dorothy Height, New York; Mabel Hawk, Atlanta; Olivia Henry and Ruth Scott, Philadelphia; Daisy Lampkin, Pittsburgh; Arenia Mallory, Lexington, Mississippi; and Sue Bailey Thurman, San Francisco. Obviously, there were sixteen award recipients. One stood out because it was an organization, not an individual: the American Association of University Women, which on June 23rd had voted overwhelmingly to open the organization to all qualified college graduates. Prompting its action was the refusal of the Washington, D.C. chapter to readmit the venerable Mary Church Terrell to membership essentially because of race. Finally, after a three-year struggle, the

Association expelled that chapter and established a new one in the nation's capital without race as a criterion for membership. AAUW president Althea Hottel accepted the citation for her group.

Whereas one female organization garnered an award, three individual women received the same honor. Perhaps the number was small because the National Council of Negro Women had handed out an average of fourteen awards to women in five years. Those favored on International Night were Mary Church Terrell, Edith Sampson, and Madame Vijaya Pandit. Interestingly, these three were women of the "darker races." If only Margaret Murray Washington had lived to witness the evening's program, Bethune may have thought. Twenty-seven years earlier, Washington had organized the International Council of Women of the Darker Races. By the time it had ceased to exist in 1940, the NCNW had appropriated its calling card: promoting greater knowledge of and contact with non-white women in various countries.[14]

While recognizing only three individual women, the NCNW singled out a dozen men. Bethune had worked closely with most and her relationship with all was one of mutual admiration. They were her "Men of Valour." Bethune's connections to four award recipients extended back to operating her Daytona school; namely, the Revered Howard Thurman, Methodist Bishop Robert E. Jones, Tuskegee Institute President Frederick D. Patterson, and Dr. Carter G. Woodson, founder of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. Bethune knew the other men from dealing with them primarily in Washington. Among those who had lived or were living in the nation's capital were three identified with Howard University. Dr. Ralph Bunche and Judge William Hastie had been professors there and

Mordecai Johnson was still Howard's president. Honorees from government were Aubrey Williams, Bethune's former boss in NYA and now a magazine publisher; and Oscar Chapman, Secretary of the Interior-Designate, who had worked a long time in the Interior Department. Bethune's other heroes were Channing H. Tobias, director of the Phelps Stokes Fund; George Denny, moderator of the American Town Hall Meetings of the Air; and Walter White, executive secretary of the NAACP. All were truly outstanding citizens. President Truman congratulated each.

Interestingly, among the nine black men honored, several were "negotiators and architects of the Negro's future in America!" In 1947, *Survey Graphic*'s photographic "Pioneers in the Struggle Against Segregation" featured three: William H. Hastie, Channing Tobias and Walter White. The next year, Roi Ottley in "The Big Ten Who Run Negro America" proposed four: Tobias, White, Mordecai Johnson and Frederick D. Patterson. Both sources included Mary McLeod Bethune also. According to Ottley, his "Big Ten" had demonstrated consistency and astuteness" on behalf of African Americans. "Their daily activities have borne directly upon the affairs of the race, often with hardship to themselves." Ottley also maintained, "By the sheer force of their personalities they have made the mass of both white and blacks feel the urgency of their actions and the effects of their efforts. . . . They have demonstrated ability to lift themselves above their jobs, project their own personalities and have it felt."[15]

Electing a New President [16]

While International Night on Tuesday had been a public relations extravaganza, the NCNW turned inward on Friday to elect a new president. Given the way it turned out, journalist-attorney-council member Marjorie McKenzie [Lawson] concluded, “the Council wasn’t ready for the emotional catharsis of choosing a new leader.” The general consensus was that “Mrs. Bethune has filled a niche to which no other person can succeed.” One measure of the great job that she had done was the excitement the imminent election generated, although given the few established showcases for civic black women, the NCNW presidency was bound to be hotly contested anyway. Several well-qualified women wanted the unsalaried post despite the organization’s $9,000 deficit and projected $53,000 budget, with funds to meet it problematic. Suited for the NCNW presidency, according to the black press, were Sadie T. Alexander, 1898-1989; Eunice Hunton Carter, 1899-1970; Dorothy Ferebee, 1890-1980; Anna Arnold Hedgeman, 1899-1990; Arenia C. Mallory, 1904-1977; Vivian Carter Mason, 1900-1982; Estelle Massy Osborne, 1901-1981; and Edith S. Sampson, 1901-1979. A cynic asserted that the presidency was all about prestige, ignoring the great good that could be effected from it. The election revealed that in keeping the NCNW together, Bethune had indeed accomplished a feat. She had kept strong leaders working together who were sometimes at cross purposes with each other.

During this election a few of these powerful personalities came forward backed and opposed by other powerful women. Having less voting clout than delegates of local councils and national affiliates, individual life members doted on Chicago attorney Edith Sampson. While the *Washington Afro-American* dissented, most thought she held the edge. But a “rampaging out-to-get Edith faction” existed. Some unidentified lady said that she would “see Sampson in hell first” [before she became the NCNW president]. Reputedly, New Yorkers threatened a permanent break with the council if Sampson were elected. This was plausible. Since they were the ones who had primarily voted the council into existence in 1935 and had been leading supporters ever since, they felt a sense of proprietorship. Moreover, at the Executive Board meeting held on the same day as International Night with President Truman, New Yorker Eunice H. Carter vented her displeasure at the decision Bethune, assisted by Daisy Lampkin, made in designating Edith Sampson as the NCNW representative on the world tour rather than herself. She insisted that the minutes show that because of her work at the United Nations as official observer for the NCNW, one of its affiliates, and the National Council of Women of the U.S., the NCNW had received the invitation to participate in the Town Hall Seminar World Tour in the first place. While that may have been problematic, obviously, Sampson wouldn't win New York's votes, if Carter had anything to do with it.[17]

Then there was Mississippi's Arenia Mallory, NCNW director of Region IV, which consisted of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. Since the last convention NCNW field secretary Bertie L. Derrick, had whipped through the country on a council-organizing spree resulting in sixty-five new chapters, many of them in Region IV.[18] Consequently, in '49, out of NCNW's eighty-four local councils, Mallory supervised thirty-one, with eight in her home state. She had come to Washington with them and the rest of the South behind her, along with "zeal and money," reminiscent of strategies Bethune had used twenty-four years earlier to win the presidency of the National Association of Colored Women in Chicago.

While somewhat muted, fierceness ruled the election. Bethune probably believed that it was going to rip the organization asunder. She may have been right, for as one journalist observed, "She [Bethune] has no peer in ability to size up and handle people, all and any kind of people. Even her bitterest enemies grudgingly admit she's a shrewd operator." Consequently, although giving the impression to the convention that it would determine the next president, on the eve of the election, Bethune decided that Dorothy Ferebee, the national treasurer, would succeed her. Obviously, educator Bethune prevailed upon educator Mallory, in their mentor-protegee relationship, to withdraw from the tight race and throw her support to Ferebee. In a stormy convention session, Mallory obliged with gusto. She declared that Ferebee was the candidate of the "little" women. By implication, she meant that Sampson was the candidate of the "select" few. Her speech divided the convention further. In response, Sampson asked to withdraw, saying that she would not participate in an "unholy alliance." The parliamentarian ruled that both Mallory's and Sampson's names would remain on the ballot. The convention was in "pandemonium." Stunned or disgusted with the fix, most delegates refused to cast a ballot. Out of a possible 400 votes, more or less, only 141 were cast. Sampson polled 19; Mallory, 25; and Ferebee, 97. But lost was the motion to elect Ferebee by acclamation. Having experienced such an emotionally charged day, the delegates who attended the dinner for Bethune that evening had much to digest.

The NCNW Honors Bethune[19]

Held in the spacious Department of the Interior*'s* dinning facility, the gala dinner feting Bethune was the work of a busy thirty-seven woman committee headed by Marion H. Elliott, chair of the council's Intercultural Committee, with co-chair Edmonia White-Davidson assisting. Backing this committee were more than seventy patrons in and out of the council. Estimates varied about the number attending, with the *Pittsburgh Courier*'s report of 800, the median figure. As publisher W.A. Scott remarked, the event was classy. The printed program included the citation on the Scroll of Honor presented to Bethune and her photograph taken at Council

House attired in "a plain, long-sleeved, black velvet evening gown, the bottom of its square neckline accentuated with a half-inch strip of silver sequins," the gown she wore to the dinner. President-elect Dorothy Ferebee presided over the celebration "with her usual poise, grace and dignity."

Tributes offered by those who knew Bethune in varying capacities dominated the program, with council women emphasizing, "She stands as a beacon light of our idea of the stature of woman." In a "contributions-oriented" testimonial, some might have omitted co-worker relations and spiritual philosophy. But on the evening of November 18th, Frank Horne, Bethune's first assistant administrator in the National Youth Administration spoke on the former; the NCNW's Sue Thurman, the latter. With Bethune having made obvious contributions to education, women's groups, and youth affairs, two individuals waxed eloquent on each cause. Appropriately, black college presidents were slated to address Bethune in the field of education: Bethune-Cookman's Richard V. Moore and Morehouse's Benjamin Mays. Journalist Alice A. Dunnigan reported, however, that B-CC Trustee Texas Adams substituted for Moore. For women's groups, Ella P. Stewart, president of the National Association of Colored Women, and Olya Margolin, legislative representative of the National Council of Jewish women took the microphone. For youth, who better to speak than a youth and the former head of the old NYA. Ruth L. Harvey of the NCNW's Washington Junior Council and Aubrey Williams, seasoned social reformer in arms with Bethune, extolled the honoree's virtues. Presenters in other areas were Edmonia White Davidson of the YWCA National Board, for Bethune's contributions to civic affairs; John H. Sengstacke, editor-publisher of the *Chicago Defender*, for press relations; Oscar L. Chapman, under secretary of the Interior Department, for government; India Edwards of the Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee, for political affairs; and Chester Williams of the State Department, for international relations.

Finally, after all the tributes were given, and then the "Scroll of Honor", flowers, and gifts as well, and the audience had "arose to its feet and burst forth with 'Let Me Call You Sweetheart,'" the NCNW Founder, in her "deep, melodious voice," prayed, "Oh God, I am so humbly grateful for this great love feast of friends who have come from the Atlantic to the Pacific, to bring tribute for the service which I have been able to render. I accept this, not for myself, but for all the great people who have worked with me. Without you I could never have been able to be the Mary McLeod Bethune which I am. . . ." To conclude, Bethune had written this farewell to her "daughters."

> Now I pass the lighted torch to you, with the hope that its flame will burn more brightly until thousands of torches are lighted around the world, and that this band of women may be so consecrated to the cause of human welfare that it is discovered they have built a bridge, incorruptible and timeless--of love, of fellowship and of peace, over which in exaltation the peoples of all the world shall pass. Will you accept the challenge?[20]

Next day, perhaps Washington's *Evening Star* summarized well what the banquet accolades collectively had emphasized about Bethune. "No other American woman of her time has been interested in a longer list of good causes or toiled more devotedly in their behalf. . . . . Mrs. Bethune has not served the Negro community exclusively," the *Star* editorialized. "Her purposes have been worldwide, her objectives unlimited by any arbitrary restriction of race or creed or class. In her 'retirement' she deserves the gratitude of all Americans of good will."[21]

Interestingly, as Bethune retired from the NCNW helm, three Washington newspapers mentioned her in conjunction with educator-race statesman Booker T. Washington, who had died more than three decades earlier. The *Star* maintained, "Her life has paralleled that of Booker T. Washington, but it has been more fruitful of immediate results. She has had the happiness of witnessing her own achievement to an extent not equaled by the sponsor of Tuskegee." Columnist Genevieve Reynolds of the *Washington Post* contended, "Many . . . regard her as the spiritual successor of Booker T. Washington." Columnist Ralph Matthews of the *Washington Afro-American* observed, "Mrs. Bethune, like Booker T. Washington, came up the hard way. . . struggling against tremendous odds in a benighted section of the country. . . Out of this poor soil she not only forced flowers of tolerance to bloom, but like ripples in a pond her influence spread from Daytona Beach across the nation."[22]

Mary McLeod Bethune was gratified with her merited recognition. She had hoped that in retiring, her "beautiful women" would in "one grand chorus" say, "She has done her work!"[23] They did so in her citation. In part it stated, "May the names Mary McLeod Bethune and the National Council of Negro Women stand forever as symbols of women united joined in the cause of world brotherhood and world peace."

Continuity in Change

For five and a half years after retirement, Mary Bethune lived to see the National Council of Negro Women move on. She witnessed her two immediate successors, Dorothy Ferebee and Vivian Mason, assume control. Each was elected for a couple of two-year terms. Bethune recognized that under her successors continuity with the past reigned and that no other existing organization could substitute for the NCNW.

A New Chief: Dorothy B. Ferebee

Some National Council sisters severely criticized the new President, for they still wanted Mary McLeod Bethune as the foremost representative of their organization in the early 1950's. Never a retiring violent, oftentimes when health permitted, Bethune obliged: in 1952 with the NCNW President abroad, in her own name she sent out the call to a council workshop. In that same year, Bethune wrote a Dallas council leader, "You are not fighting hard enough; you must get in the game and fight and fight hard. . . . I am not reading enough about you in the papers." Assuredly, it was not easy for President Dorothy Boulding Ferebee to follow a legend. Historian Bettye Collier-Thomas reported that it took people at least a year before they properly acknowledged the new NCNW chief executive.[24]

President Ferebee took it all in stride, amply complimenting Bethune and giving her multiple platforms at the regular NCNW meetings.[25] The new chief was confident and well-prepared, managing her council responsibilities while holding down a full-time job at Howard University. Coming from a distinguished family counting eight lawyers and notable clubwoman Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin of Boston, she was the daughter of Richard Benjamin and Florence (Ruffin) Boulding. After earning degrees from Simmons College in Boston and Tufts Medical School, she began careers as a private physician and a Howard University faculty member. She married dentist Claude Thurston Ferebee and became the mother of two. Dr. Ferebee burst into national consciousness as medical director of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Mississippi Health Project. Beginning in 1935, for seven summers it sent volunteer health care personnel in mobile field units into Mississippi's Holmes and Bolivar counties, where professional health care barely existed. In 1939, Ferebee became supreme basileus of her national sorority. Moreover, she was involved in many other charitable and civic organizations.

Occupying the NCNW presidency permitted Ferebee various opportunities. She gave health care education a higher priority on the council's agenda, just as one might think a physician-educator would. Attending the International Conference of Women in Greece and touring Germany as a member of the U.S. government's eleven-woman group studying that country's progress towards democracy in 1951, as well as revisiting it the following year, helped her to emphasize internationalism in the council program, along with globetrotter Edith Sampson, the U.S. Alternate Delegate to the U.N. Under Ferebee, other NCNW's priorities were desegregation of the armed forces, housing, employment, and voting. The organization pursued these advocacies largely in relation to other non-profit organizations and the federal government. Even though "advocating" sometimes provided no tangible benefits, Ferebee explained to council members that "leadership, unity, cooperation, action, etc.," while intangible, "are among the most important things of today's world." In part, these intangibles were council objectives.[26]

As the preceding indicate, even with a new president continuity with NCNW's past reigned. For about two years, President Ferebee held on to both executive director Jeanetta W. Brown and administrative secretary Arabella Denniston. Capable NCNW veterans whom she knew well continued in the leadership corps. Five elected individuals, who had previously served on the Board of Directors were re-elected, but not necessarily in the same position. They were Eunice Carter and Daisy George, New York; Daisy Lampkin, Pittsburgh; Sue Thurman, San Francisco; and Doris Wesley, Houston. Most of the other elected directors, were either well-known or had been active in the council for years. These included Jean Murrel Capers, Cleveland; Regina Chandler and Marion Elliot, Washington; Olivia Henry, Philadelphia; Dorothy Height, New York; Vivian O. Marsh, Berkely, California; Vivian C. Mason, Norfolk;

Ora Stokes Perry, Kansas City, Missouri; Fannye Ayer Ponder, St. Petersburg, Florida; and Beulah T. Whitby, Detroit. Other directors hailed from Jacksonville, New Orleans, and Atlanta.[27]

Moreover, Ferebee continued the fundraisers. For example, in 1951 the council sponsored two celebrated entertainers: in May, jazz vocalist Hazel Scott in a New York benefit; the next month, the world renown Josephine Baker in Washington. The latter affair was "the largest, most expensive, and yet most successful financial project" the council had ever undertaken. When President Ferebee presented Baker a NCNW commendations citation before 5,676 fans, the entertainer declared that it was the third happiest moment of her life. Baker had missed the council reception a month earlier for outstanding women, when for the first time it was not held at the Council House, but the Crystal Room of the Willard Hotel.[28]

In addition to extending itself on such occasions, the NCNW continued to be involved in civic affairs sponsored by others. In the first six months of 1951, for example, it sent emissaries to meetings of the Citizens Federal Committee on Education, Women's Organizations in Defense, National Citizens Committee for United Nations Day, and Civilian Defense Conference; also, the National Conference on U.S. Foreign Policy, regional conferences of the American Association for the United Nations, the NAACP's Civil Rights Conference, U.S. Department of Treasury Meeting, and U.S. Attorney General's Sixth Annual Conference on Citizenship.[29]

Furthermore, continuity characterized the NCNW annual conferences. The 1950 meeting, for instance, was similar to its predecessor. Held at the same locale with , both meetings aired financial woes and probable solutions. Official reports of all kinds overflowed both, from the president, executive director, treasurer, regional directors, national affiliates, and departments. In 1950, the “Youth Conservation” Department enjoyed greater emphasis than previously, probably because of the White House Conference on Children and Youth that year and Ferebee’s membership on the executive board of the White House’s Children and Youth Council and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). And, while Frieda Miller, director of the Women’s Bureau, had spoken in ‘49, the next year, in a two and a half-hour session on “Labor and Industry,” again Miller presented. At both meetings, council sisters visited six embassies. Only the Haitians opened their doors for both. Others embassies that did so in 1949 were the British, Greek, Indian, Israeli, and Mexican; the next year, the Canadian, Guatemalan, Liberian, Pakistani, and Philippine. Although the U.S. President did not stand forth as the principal draw on International Night in 1950, the council did very well in having the U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson speak to a full house. And, the custom of the dinner meeting continued on with addresses from two women experts on national defense, Esther Strong and Louise Saunders.[30]

While the council functioned mostly as usual, a few things occurred differently during Ferebee tenure. It ceased publication of its celebrated quarterly *Women United* in 1950, except as a comprehensive, hard-cover year book the next year. Likewise, the ‘51 convention voted to hold conventions every other year, which meant that the next regular meeting convened in ‘53. But apparently this was too much for some. With President Ferebee on a U.S. government group study mission in Germany, the Founder-President Emeritus called the Board of Directors to a workshop at Council House for November 14-16, 1952, which culminated with a dinner at Howard University's Baldwin Hall, complete with guest speaker and honorees. Approximately 100 women from twenty-one states and the District of Columbia responded. Except for the venue and smaller number, the workshop had the feel of recent annual meetings.[31]

Probably the best known initiative of the Ferebee presidency was a 1951 reception for Elizabeth Barkley, the bride of two years of the U.S. Vice-President Alben Barkley of Kentucky at Washington's Shoreham Hotel. This tea occurred during Brotherhood Week on Saturday, February 24, 1951. About 500 women of all backgrounds attended. Certainly, "Negro women came from all over the country to meet Mrs. Barkley."[32] "Guests were requested to make new friends, thus the affair was called the "Friends' Tea." Most praised the council profusely for affording them the opportunity to fellowship with such a diverse group of women and pronounced the event "one of the most outstanding social affairs in cultural relations sponsored by the NCNW." Spouses of Washington officials mixed and mingled, including the wives of the Attorney General and the Postmaster, Mrs. J. Howard McGrath and Mrs. Jesse M. Donaldson respectively; the wife of Supreme Court Justice Tom Clark; and those of several ambassadors, including the French and British; along with Congresswomen, business women, housewives, and teachers. Some even poured tea.

The event had not occurred at the Shoreham by accident. The NCNW fought to rent the main ballroom, because no major Washington Hotel had previously opened up to a chiefly African American group. Of necessity, the council had summoned its essentially white allies: the National Council of Jewish Women, the League of Women Voters, the National Council of

Catholic Women, and the Telephone Communication Workers of the Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO). Each had sent an emissary with President Ferebee and Executive Director Jeanetta Brown for a showdown with the hotel manager. "After consultation with the Banquet Manager and the Hotel Manager, and after applied pressure by these representatives," as Director Brown explained it, "the Hotel Manager reluctantly agreed to rent the facilities of the hotel to the Friends' Interracial Committee of the National Council of Negro Women."[33] When a new administration came to the capital, the NCNW staged a tea in honor of Patricia Nixon, wife of V.P. Richard Nixon.

Vivian C. Mason in Charge

Just as a new administration took power in the country in 1953, it did so in the NCNW. The council elected Vivian Carter Mason as president at its big November 1953 conference--the one that featured Nelson A. Rockefeller, Under Secretary of the US. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare on International Night. Born in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, on February 10, 1900, Vivian was the daughter of George and Florence Carter, a Methodist minister and music teacher. At the University of Chicago, from which she graduated, she had concentrated on political economy and social welfare. Later, she married William T. Mason, an astute real estate and insurance businessman. They had one son. Vivian Mason was New York City's first black female administrator in the Department of Welfare. In terms of voluntary societies, she was vice-president of the U.S. Congress of American Women and in 1945 went to Paris for a meeting of the International Congress of Women, where the International Democratic Federation of Women was created She was president of the Norfolk NCNW metropolitan chapter and vice-president of the national. When President Ferebee had been out of the country, usually Mason acted in her stead. After presiding over the '52 workshop, Bethune wrote her, "I thought you did a rather unusual job. I am sure stock for you went up very high in the estimation of all the women present. I got the echoes of their reactions. You did a splendid job."[34]

Certainly, President Mason took to heart the NCNW 1936 charter provision that declared an organizational objective to be "To educate and encourage Negro women to participate in civic, political, economic and educational activities in the same manner as other Americans participate." For a twelve-month period beginning in November 1953, for example, the NCNW was well represented in the activities of other groups. Dr. Arenia C. Mallory attended the Triennial Conference of the International Council of Women of the World in Helsinki, Finland. Other NCNW sisters participated in meetings at home, including the Conference on Aging in Ann Arbor, Michigan and a meeting of the General Federation of Women's Clubs in Denver.

Most assemblages of interest, however, occurred either in New York or Washington. In the former city, the largest number of council members, thirty-nine, participated in the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women; the second largest, twelve, the *New York Herald Tribune* Forum. Other New York-based conferences with council women representatives were the American Association for the United Nations, Citizens Conference on International Economic Union, Crusade for Freedom, National Advisory Committee on Health, Committee on Careers in Nursing, National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, National Health Council, National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing, and the Bicentennial Conference of Pi Lambda Honorary Society. In Washington, four council members attended each of the following: the

American Association for the United Nations, a Citizenship Conference, and a National Conference on Rural Education. Other Washington meetings that included NCNW emissaries were the Women's Bureau Conference; White House Conference on Highway Safety; Education Conference; Exchange Persons Program; Committee for Equal Pay; United Community Services; National Beauty Culturist League; Conference on Delinquency, Health, Education and Welfare; National Housing Conference; and Commission on the Status of Women.[35]

While the NCNW networked with others, it turned inward as well. Mason used her expertise in administration to streamline the management of headquarters and to bind chapters closer to the national office. The NCNW turned inward, however, not only to deal with internal matters, but to formulate positions on major issues of the day. During the Mason presidency the Supreme Court's *Brown* Decision on the constitutionality of segregation in public schools aroused the common weal like no other issue. Speaking for a unanimous court, on May 17, 1954, Chief Justice Earl Warren proclaimed the following.

> We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment.[36]

Implementation of the decision would require gigantic reforms in American life at a time when most Americans cherished the status quo. The Cold War had thrown reformers out of favor, for many viewed any leftward change, such as desegregation, the work of Communists. Historian Irwin Klibaner contends, "The anti-Communist fixation in American foreign and domestic policy disrupted many efforts for peaceful social change. . . Consequently, the Supreme Court's historic decision of 1954. . .found potential supporters too weak and disorganized and segregationists too strong for the decision to have much effect." He meant *immediate* effect. It would take Daytona Beach, for example, eight or nine years before it permitted an African American student to walk into a classroom at Mainland High School, previously all white.[37]

African Americans hailed the desegregation ruling. Bethune declared, "God bless those nine men who had the courage to hand down the truth to America and the world according to the Constitution of the United States." About a month afterwards, thirteen national affiliates, officers, and department chairs of the NCNW came together with specialists to craft a response to the decision. The council disseminated that response to all national affiliates and local council presidents to encourage them "to work courageously and consistently with calmness of purpose and spirit to foster in all possible ways, the implementation of the historic decision of the Supreme Court." The response statement challenged members to help "to create a climate for the acceptance of the decision," in part by urging them "to mobilize the support of local and state officials," and to make "the whole process of preparation for integrated living a part of their daily lives." All council leaders were savvy enough to realize, however, that the Brown decision was only the beginning of a process, and not the end, and that it wouldn't be easy to implement.[38] How right they were! During that summer, when the Washington D.C. School Board decided that in light of school re-zoning for integration, pupils would have the option of finishing whatever elementary, junior high, and senior high school they were in at the time, the NCNW signed a written protest to this gradualism, along with the NAACP, American Veterans

Committee, Catholic Inter-Racial Council, and the Unitarian Fellowship for Social Justice. Even so, foot-dragging continued as the order of the day.[39]

While the NCNW could make little headway in creating a climate for the acceptance of school desegregation, in 1955 it could joyfully observe its Twentieth Anniversary. This could have focused some on the truth that sometimes blacks and whites were "women united;" and that where attitudes were positive, desegregation worked. One enjoyable anniversary event was the pilgrimage to Daytona Beach, April 7-9, 1955, where council sisters witnessed the works of their Founder: Bethune-Cookman College, Bethune-Volusia Beach; and the Mary McLeod Bethune Foundation. About the occasion, the intuitive Bethune remarked, "It had something that could not be expressed verbally, only felt. It was historic. It did something to each person present."[40]

The most significant anniversary affair, however, occurred during Brotherhood Week, an observance for all Americans, which began in 1934 in the birthday week of founding father George Washington. Facilitated by the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the week was "to create justice, amity, understanding and cooperation among Protestants, Catholics, and Jews," and to emphasize "the basic worth of human personality" inherent in these faiths.[41] On February 26, 1955, the NCNW celebrated the week by giving a luncheon honoring Mary Bethune at the Willard Hotel in Washington. There, former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt challenged all not just to talk brotherhood, but to practice it. For advancing brotherhood principles, the National Council of Negro Women cited media personality Ed Sullivan, Professor Auguste Hoggman of the University of Berlin, and its own stalwart Jane Morrow Spaulding, then consultant to the Foreign Operations Administration.

Naturally, attention focused on the NCNW Founder. About 800 people had come to pay homage to her and to hear her oratory. Reacting to the program, Bethune spoke to all and then directly to council members. "I am grateful to you, my daughters. I have been the dreamer. But, oh, how wonderfully you have interpreted my dreams." Concluding, she gave voice to her well-known, and profoundly felt Christianity. "God bless you. God inspire you, God dedicate every single one of you [to] a new today," she said, "to go out and shine! shine! so that your light may be seen in distant places and men and women everywhere will know the spirit of brotherhood, the spirit of the great Christ who gave Himself that we might have life and have it more abundantly."

Later, in her newspaper column, Bethune named the event "one of the most heartwarming experiences of my life." To Cecelia Smith, her closest schoolmate, she related, "I think that the luncheon was one of the outstanding things that will ever be done by the National Council of Negro Women. It was really a gem. I thank God that I have lived to see the women in action in such a find way."[42]

Towards a "True and Unfettered Democracy"

In 1955, the National Council of Negro Women had contended for twenty years with the downside of gender and race. It was circumscribed politically by its members' relative lack of experience in running large-scale operations and their lack of control over substantial economic resources, the general afflictions of mainstream women's organizations of the era in relation to male-dominated ones. Furthermore, it was handicapped as a creation of black women. In a white-dominated country and world, its members were barred from a myriad of opportunities available to other women.

As the organization's indispensable center, Bethune helped NCNW members handle their ascriptive limitation by offering hope that America would afford them justice. Bethune believed that collective activity, such as the council represented, prodded the country towards that end; that coalition effort was the chief means by which an aggrieved people become powerful politically and economically. In the process of harnessing black women's organizational strength, Mary Bethune inspired her "beautiful women" in part through majestic public address. She did not so much urge positive change, as to emphasize the change already in progress as a harbinger of the better future, no matter how token it may have appeared.[43] Her council members cited her appropriately when they proclaimed, "Through your work, [you] have given to us, the glory of womanhood, the permanent hope for full citizenship, and an abiding faith in our fellowman."[44]

Although some New Yorkers contended for headquarters in their city, Bethune knew that the seat of government afforded unrivaled opportunities to advance causes of ebony women. Consequently, the National Council of Negro Women planted itself in the life of black and white Washington, as the maintenance and functions of the Council House suggested. From 1938 to 1955, no other national black women's group participated as consistently in capital city life, despite shrieks that the council duplicated the work of a more established organization. And, council members' efforts were not in vain. They laid a foundation for the future, from which, for example, their emissary was included in the national leadership corps for civil rights in the momentous 1960's, when leaders of other distaff groups were mostly excluded.[45]

The accomplishments of the National Council of Negro Women during Bethune's lifetime may be classified in six broad and overlapping categories.

1. *The NCNW enriched the infrastructure of black women networks, especially by nurturing leaders of national affiliates and local councils.* In some cases, by serving as a prototype of procedure and program emphases, it offered leaders models that they could copy in their own units. The council gave thousands of women opportunities to participate in various projects which they may have had to otherwise forego. It would have been unattractive, for instance, for any single council affiliates to sell U.S. Savings Bonds sufficient to name a liberty ship; together, however, they did it. And, some affiliates may not have had the resources to stage an employment clinic from scratch; but the council as whole developed models and materials for all.

The NCNW kept women leaders intelligently focused on macro civic issues. In 1943, for example, it made available to them experts on housing, consumer education, employment, child welfare, the armed forces, and intercultural relationships. At most other annual meetings timely issues were intelligently discussed by knowledgeable people. The women returned to their local communities or national organizations knowing the latest information on these issues "with something of the know-how of mobilizing opinion and organizing for community action," as the *Washington Post* 's 1947 editorial on the NCNW read.

Although NCNW's constituent national organizations and local councils often failed to participate in projects launched from Council House, nevertheless, simply bringing their leaders together constituted a form of NCNW nurture, because they encouraged and learned from each other what worked and what didn't, and were fortified in the knowledge that the unit each represented had allies in pursuit of worthwhile goals. Moreover, the council stimulated these leaders to reach out to other women, as Theoline Simpson explained in "Why I Am a Member of the NCNW."

> My association with the women of the National Council has encouraged me to work and cooperate with women of progressive groups wherever I find them in an effort to improve the status of the Negro People of America.[46]

These factors were probably of special importance to the newer national organizations that inherently profited from the National Council of Negro Women and other forums providing recognition and stimuli for growth. Those founded during Bethune's presidential tenure were the National Jeanes Association, for supervising public school teachers who promoted vocational instruction and were funded in part by a private source; Women's Army for National Defense (WAND), established to afford black women opportunities to render volunteer defense services in their communities during World War II and afterwards; Lambda Kappa Mu Sorority for businesswomen; National Association of Beauty School Owners and Teachers; National Association of Fashion and Accessory Designers; Auxiliary to the National Dental Association; and the Women's Auxiliary to National Medical Association.

2. *The NCNW multiplied points of positive contacts between black and white women leaders at a time that apartheid ruled race relations.* During the first twenty years of NCNW, relatively few opportunities existed for black and white women to come together as equals. The NCNW made a concerted effort to include white women in their activities, especially through

their annual meetings and as contributors to their journal. It was probably enlightening to some whites that the NCNW took the initiative to involve them in supporting the Fair Employment Practices Committee or to participate in a series of conferences on improving race relations, or to commend some for their contributions through its annual "Rolls of Honor," or to invite them to receptions, luncheons, or dinners. In the late 1940's the NCNW even aspired "to include the total integration of all of America's people--regardless of race, creed or color, into every aspect of national life and world understanding," and renamed their magazine *Women United* to be inclusive. Through the council, black women leaders either established or furthered contacts with various female leaders in government, including First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt; Congresswomen Frances Payne Bolton, Helen Gahagan Douglas, and Chase Going Woodhouse; bureaucrats Mary Anderson, Frieda Miller, and Katherine Lenroot; and diplomat Florence Jeffery Harriman. Also, it courted relations with the likes of historian Mary Ritter Beard, writer-editor Lillian Smith, labor leader Dorothy Bellanco, international health administrator Martha M. Eliot, and Mary Pillsbury Lord, chair of the National Civilian Advisory Committee for the Women's Army Corps and other civic bodies. Additionally, the NCNW networked with the leaders of various predominately white women's organizations including the National Council of Women of the United States, National Council of Jewish Women, National Council of Catholic Women, American Women's Voluntary Service, League of Women Voters, and General Federation of Women's Clubs.

3. *The NCNW projected an enhanced image of black women and their history to the country and world that served somewhat as a corrective to the skewed images then circulating.*

The image of black women in America was less than attractive. They were never portrayed in mainstream media holistically. They were not presented as normal Americans with wide-ranging backgrounds, interests, desires, and aspirations. In America's mind, black women were essentially servants, sometimes mammies, sometimes sirens. They were seen as immoral, superstitious, or as comic relief, or just in the shadows of white people. True, at mid-century 40 percent of black women in the work force were domestics, but that was how they made a living and not necessarily who they were.[47]

The NCNW showed a different picture of black women for all who had eyes to see. It was a picture of educated, well-groomed, well-dressed, articulate, and civic-minded women. They were teachers, nurses, secretaries, clerks, librarians, administrators, attorneys, artists, writers, businesswomen, bureaucrats, homemakers, and community activists,--the kind of black women seldom seen in Hollywood films or mainstream newspapers and magazines of the era.. They went to the White House for meetings, lobbied their Congressmen, testified before Congressional Committees, and in other ways worked for civic improvement. The many visitors to Council House or those who visited the NCNW annual meetings understood that council members had concerns similar to those of other civic-minded women. Upon reading the *Aframerican Woman's journal*, perhaps whites began to realize that there were millions of inarticulate black women for whom the NCNW might be speaking. Upon hearing of black women's contribution to the nation during World War II through the NCNW's "We Serve America" Week or their role in launching the S.S. *Harriet Tubman*, it may have occurred to some whites that black women were as patriotic as other citizens. Upon learning of the black women's participation in the 1940 New York World's Fair, or their support for a stamp honoring Booker T. Washington and a monument to George Washington Carver, or the book and archival display in the Council House Board Room, some whites may have realized that black women had an appreciation for their history, just as others appreciated theirs.

People other than white Americans observed the positive images of black women that the NCNW projected. Foreigners diplomats saw and appreciated them, as their attendance at NCNW functions year after year indicated. So did indigenous peoples who had encountered and were fascinated by Edith Sampson as she carried the National Council of Negro Women's name around the world. For those with little, such symbolism engendered hope, especially among the daughters of African Americans. The New York black teenager Shirley Chisholm, for example, after seeing in the black press one photo after another of Bethune with Eleanor Roosevelt and other movers and shakers, began to ponder the possibility that she, too, might one day become a national figure. As such thinking in the life of the first African American Congresswoman may suggest, perhaps the NCNW's projection of black women as civic doers impacted most a rising generation of black women.[48]

4. *The NCNW helped to pioneer the professional employment of black women in the federal establishment.* In Mary Bethune's words, the council assisted in "opening doors," especially for those a generation younger than herself. In light of the NCNW's demonstration during its White House Conference of the need for ebony women in professional government positions, at least in federal programs benefitting black women and children, and the compilation of several lists of black women prepared for professional federal employment, very

few race women found such jobs. But without Bethune and the council, its problematic, for example, that there would have been sister professionals in the Children's Bureau and Women's Bureau in the 1940's, given the nonchalance to their employment of white women who directed these programs. And the fact that in 1941, Bethune publicly lauded the ten sister professionals who had broken through to jobs in the federal bureaucracy underscored the significance of white-collar black women in government.

5. *The NCNW made the presence of black women customary at national and international meetings involving women, sponsored by either government or private entities.* Fortunately for the NCNW, it first insisted on participation in the federal government's activities for women at a time when the incomparable and sympathetic Eleanor Roosevelt lived in the White House. She understood the justice of black women's requests and, more than any other individual in Washington, facilitated their participation in governmental affairs. NCNW membership on the National Advisory Committee of the Women's Interest Section in the War Department was just one of many ways in which black women served national interests along with other women. Even though the government did not treat black women equitably, for example, it appointed none of their organizations as advisors to the U.S. delegation at the founding conference of the United Nations--but five organizations of white women--out of a total of forty or forty-two--it did recognize the NCNW in other ways. Relative to black women's participation in events sponsored by private groups, NCNW's greatest triumph was facilitating the participation of Edith S. Sampson in the Town Hall World Seminar, which led to her being elected president of that seminar, and later appointed an alternate U.S. delegate to the United

Nations. While the seminar had been a one-time affair, the NCNW participated on a continuing basis in the U.S. National Council of Women, the American Association for the United Nations, and other such groups.

6. *The NCNW advanced civil rights as a national issue.* While the NCNW had few mass meetings at its annual assembly called "Women United for Civil Rights," as in 1948--in support of President Harry Truman's civil rights initiatives--nevertheless, it *consistently* advocated the extension of rights to African Americans, particularly enfranchisement, strong federal anti-lynching legislation, and non-discrimination in opportunities for education, employment, housing, and health care. Often the NCNW labored in cooperation with leading civil rights groups, including the NAACP, National Committee to Abolish the Poll Tax, the Federal Council on Negro Affairs (Black Cabinet), the March on Washington Movement, National Council for a Permanent Fair Employment Practices Committee, the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, and the Southern Conference Education Fund. The NCNW's inclination to work within coalitions in letter-writing campaigns, research, dissemination of literature, informational forums, and the like, proved indecisive in creating dramatic reform. That occurred in the direct-action protest movement of the 1960's. But like so many other groups prior to that time, the NCNW from 1935 to 1955 helped to lay a foundation for that revolution.

While not an accomplishment per se like those above, still, the NCNW idealism merits comment, for it was an exhilarating aspect of the organization. Nowhere was it better expressed than in the vow from the 1950's dear to members. It read this way.

> It is our pledge to make a lasting contribution to all
> that is finest and best in America, to cherish and enrich

> her heritage of freedom and progress by working for the integration of all of her people, regardless of race, creed, or national origin, into her spiritual, social, cultural, civic and political life, and thus aid her to achieve the glorious destiny of a true and unfettered democracy.[49]

Notes

1. Robert L. Daniel, *American Women in the 20th Century: The Festival of Life* (San Diego: Harcourt Brae Jovanovich, 1987), 185-188, 197-198; Beverly Greene Bond, "Roberta Church: Race and the Republican Party in the 1950s," in *Portraits of African American Life Since 1865*, ed. Nina Mjagkij (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2003), 187-188.

2. Daniel, *American Women*, 217-221; Bond, "Roberta Church,"193-194; Louis Lomax, *The Negro Revolt* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962). 67-68; Peter M. Bergman, *The Chronological History of the Negro in America* (New York: New American Library, 1969), 542-543.

3. Bethune to Constance Daniel, February 5, 1949, National Council of Negro Women Papers, Series 5, Box 10, Folder 181, Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site, Washington, D.C.; Powell quoted from Earl Devine Martin, "Mary McLeod Bethune: A Prototype of the Rising Consciousness of the American Negro." (M.A. thesis, Northwestern University, 1956), 86.

4. Bethune to Jeanetta Brown, April 6, 1949, NCNW Papers, Series 12, Box 2; Bettye Collier-Thomas, "The National Council of Negro Women," in *Black Women in America, ed. Darlene Clark Hine*, et. al. (Brooklyn, New York: Carlson Publishing, 1993), 861; Quotes from Lois Taylor, "National Council for Negro Women Selling Opportunities for Leadership," *Washington Afro-American*, April 21, 1951, Vertical File, Martin Luther King Library, Washington, D.C.

5. Bethune to Constance Daniel, February 5, 1949; Michael R. Gardner, *Harry Truman and Civil Rights: Moral Courage and Political Risks* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), 149.

6. Bethune to Constance Daniel, February 5, 1949.

7. Photograph showing host Ralph Edwards and Bethune with guests, NCNW Papers, Number 912, Series 14, Box 3, File 5.

8. Lilliane R. Davidson, "Friends of B-Cookman to Open Drive in N.Y. for $2,860,000,"

The Sunday News-Journal, October 30, 1949, Daytona Beach, BF.

9. Bethune to James Dumbroski, August 5, 1949, BF.

10. Bethune to Eleanor Roosevelt, January 18, 1949, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, 1945-52, Number 3259, Franklin D Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

11. Eunice H. Carter to Jeanetta W. Brown, February 28, 1949, Eunice Carter to Bethune, June 2, 1949, Bethune to Eunice Carter, June 21, 1949, NCNW Papers, Series 12, Box 2; Bethune to Constance Daniel, February 5, 1949.

12. This summary of International Night was based primarily on the following: International Night Program, November 15, 1949, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 4, Folder 48; *Washington Afro-American*, November 19, 1949, 1, 9; Mrs. W.A. Scott, "Sidelights" [column], *Birmingham World*, November 26, 1949, 5; "Truman Says 'No Retreat' in Equal Rights Fight; Praises Dr. Bethune" *Washington Post*, November 16, 1949, 4B; "Truman Renews Rights Vow at NCNW Confab," *Chicago Defender*, November 26, 1949, 17.

13. "The President Speaks to Council Members," *Women United*, (January 1950), 3-4.

14. Constance E.H. Daniel, "Together Across a New Frontier, *Women United*, (October 1949), 24-25; Elaine M. Smith, "International Council of Women of the Darker Races," in *Organizing Black America: An Encyclopedia of African American Associations*, ed., Nina Mjagkij (Garland Publishing, 2001), 492-494.

15. "Pioneers in the Struggle Against Segregation," *Survey Graphic*, 36 (January 1947), 91-92. Others cited were W.E.B. DuBois, Charles H. Houston, A. Philip Randolph, and Paul Robeson; all quotes from Roi Ottley, "The Big Ten Who Run Negro America," *Negro Digest*, 6 (May 1948), 4-9. Others cited were W.E.B. DuBois, A. Phillip Randolph, Charles S. Johnson, Willard S. Townsend, and Paul Robeson.

16. This summary of the NCNW presidential election was based primarily on the following: Marjorie McKenzie, "Pursuit of Democracy" [column], *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 3, 1949, 15; Franklin Fosdick, "War Among the Women," *Negro Digest*, (February 1950), 21-25; "Women Shed Tears as Bethune Retires," and "Stirring Gathering Draws Many to D. C.," *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 26, 1949, 1, 5, 8; Mrs. W. A. Scott, "Sidelights" [column], *Birmingham World*, 1949; *Chicago Defender*, November 26, 1949, 1; *Washington Afro-American*, November 15, 1949, 11.

17. Minutes of the Board of Directors, November 13, 1949, NCNW Papers, Series 3, Box 1, Folder 4.

18. Bertie Derrick to Bethune, April 5, 1948, NCNW Papers, Series 5, Box 10, Folder 181.

19. This summary of the dinner was based primarily on the following: Dinner in Honor of Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune, Printed Souvenir Program, November 18, 1949, Private Collection; quotes from Alice A. Dunnigan, "Thousands Attend Testimonial Dinner for Mrs. Bethune," November 21, 1949, Claude Barnett Papers, Chicago Historical Society; "Mrs. Bethune Steps Down," *Washington Afro-American*, November 22, 1949, 1.

20. Bethune, quoted from Dunnigan, "Thousands Attend Dinner, and "Farewell Address," NCNW Papers, Series 4, Box 7, Folder 47.

21. *Evening Star*, [Washington, D.C.}, November 19, 1949, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial Foundation Papers, Box 18, FDRL.

22. Ibid., Genevieve Reynolds, "Dr. Bethune Eulogized," *Washington Post*, November 19, 1949, 3B; Ralph Matthews, "Can 'Ma' Bethune Really Quit," *Washington Afro-American*, November 19, 1949, 1, 21.

23. Bethune, "Mary McLeod Bethune, *Chicago Defender*, October 29, 1949, 66.

24. Criticism of Ferebee was so severe at the Executive Board Meeting held in her absence on November 14-16, 1952, that it was expunged from the minutes, according to Vivian C. Mason to Bethune, November 26, 1952, BF, Part 1, Reel 18. Bethune to Reba C. Hardin, September 10, 1952, BF, Part 1, Reel 18; Collier-Thomas, "The Council," 858.

25. In 1950, for example, when Ferebee formally opened the annual meeting, she dedicated it to the Founder-President Emeritus, and "presented her for remarks." Minutes of the 15th Annual NCNW Convention, November 16-19, 1950, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 4, Folder 52. Furthermore, Bethune was listed on the program as a speaker for International Night, as a discussant on the Children's Bureau, and as the respondent to the Historical Skit observing the NCNW Fifteenth Anniversary at the council dinner. Official Program, 15th Annual Convention of the National Council of Negro Women, Incorporated, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 4, Folder 54.

26. Margaret Bernice Smith Bristow, "Dorothy Boulding Ferebee," in *Notable Black American Women*, ed. Jessie Carney Smith (Detroit: Gale Research, 1992), 340-342; Margaret Jerrido, "Dorothy Celeste Boulding Ferebee," in *Black Women in America*, 425-426; Quotes from Minutes of the NCNW Annual Convention, October 25-27, 1951, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 5, Folder 58; Arabella Denniston to Bethune, March 16, 1951, BF, Part 1, Reel 17.

27. Election results appeared in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 26, 1949, 8; officers

in 1949 were listed in the 1949 Convention Program.

28. Bethune to Jeanetta W. Brown, May 2, 1951, BF, Part 1, Reel 17; Bethune to Hazel Scott, May 16, 1951, BF, Part 2, Reel 8.

29. Jeanetta Welch Brown, Report of the Executive Director, January 2-July 15, 1951, BF, Part 1, Reel 17.

30. Although the 1949 Conference program listed the Ethiopian Embassy as participating in receiving NCNW members, in the Highlights of the conference, the Greek Embassy was listed instead of Ethiopia's. See Highlights of the 14th NCNW Conference, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 4, Folder 52; Minutes, 15th Annual NCNW Convention; Official Program 15th Annual NCNW Convention.

31. Minutes of NCNW Annual Convention, October 25-27, 1951, NCNW Papers, Series 2, Box 5, Folder 58; "National Council's Session Opened by Mrs. M. Bethune," *Journal and Guide* [Norfolk], November 29, 1952, BF; "Pearlie's Prattle [column] and "National Council's Honorees of Year," *Washington Afro-American*, November 22, 1952, 9; Vivian Mason to Bethune, November 26, 1952.

32. Vivian Mason to Bethune, April 13, 1951, BF, Part 2, Reel 6.

33. Brown, Report, January 2-July 15, 1951.

34. V.A. Shadron, "Vivian Carter Mason," in *Black Women in America*, ed. Hine, 754-756; "Women's International Organization Formed," *Aframerican Woman's Journal*, (December 1945), 17; Bethune to Vivian C. Mason, December 2, 1952, BF.

35. NCNW Report, November 8, 1957, Appendix Page XXVI, NCNW Vertical File, Schomburg Research Center.

36. Quoted from "*Brown v. Board of Education*," May 17, 1954, in *From Slavery to Freedom*, John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2000), 691.

37. Irwin Klibaner, *Conscience of a Troubled South: The Southern Conference Education Fund, 1946-1966* (Carlson Publishing: Brooklyn, N.Y, 1989), 1-2; Interview with Elizabeth Johnson, July 19, 2003, Tulsa.

38. Bethune to Hazel Wilson, June 8, 1954, BF, Part 2, Reel 13; "Implementing the Supreme Court Decision," TELEFACT, May-June, 1954, NCNW Papers, Series 5, Box 2, Folder 11.

39. "Capital to Erase School Color Line,"*New York Times*, July 2, 1954, 9.

40. NCNW Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting, February 25, 1955, NCNW Papers, Series 3, Box 2, Folder 27; Announcement of Annual Regional Conference, Regions III and IV, BF, Part 1, Reel 19; Bethune to Vivian Mason, April 25, 1955, BF, Part 2, Reel 6.

41. An Invitation to Observe Brotherhood Week, February 18-25, 1940, Frank Porter Graham Papers, Number 1141, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

42. "Brotherhood Urged," *New York Times*, February 27, 1955, 36; Bethune, "Address to the National Council of Negro Women Brotherhood Luncheon," February 26, 1955, in *Bethune: Building a Better World*, McCluskey and Smith, 281-282; Bethune, "Mary McLeod Bethune" [column], *Chicago Defender*, March 12, 1955; Bethune to Cecelia Smith, March 18, 1955, BF, Part 2, Reel 10.

43. Conclusion reached in paper of Elaine M. Smith, "'My Fires Still Burn Bright:' Mary McLeod Bethune's Rhetoric for Social Change in the 1950s," read at the annual meeting of the Rhetoric Society of America, May 2000.

44. NCNW, Scroll of Honor to Bethune, November 18, 1949.

45. Karen Anderson, "National Council of Negro Women," in *Organizing Black America: An Encyclopedia of African American Association*, ed. Nina Mjagkij, 449.

46. Theoline Simpson, "Why I Am a Member of the NCNW," *Aframerican Woman's Journal*, (Summer-Fall, 1947), 26.

47. William Grant Still, "How Do We Stand in Hollywood?"*Opportunity* 23 (1945), 74-77.

48. Elaine M. Smith, "Introduction: Womanist Activism: 'We Are Being Heard!'" in *Bethune: Building a Better World*, ed. McCluskey and Smith, 135.

49. Preamble to the Constitution of the National Council of Negro Women, November 1954, NCNW Papers, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 1.

Chapter 6

Still Citizen Extraordinaire

Introduction

For African Americans, terror stalked the South in the 1950's. Even before the Supreme Court's *Brown* decision had crystalized the massive resistance of whites to the prospect of desegregated public schools, the region's long tradition of violence dramatically touched the Bethune-Cookman College family. In addition to the bombings in the Greater Miami area, on Christmas night, December 25, 1951, segregationists bombed the home NAACP State Secretary Harry T. Moore, 46, in Mims, Florida, about forty miles south of Daytona Beach. The bomb silenced forever his voter registration drives, inquiries into the malfeasance of public officials, and other civil rights activities. At a later date it caused also the death of his loving wife Henrietta. Both were B-CC graduates, as were their daughters, Annie and Evangeline. B-CC President Richard V. Moore spoke at the funeral for Florida's most "militant leader in the fight for human rights." In the aftermath of the bombing, racists threats to B-CC loomed so menacingly that the FBI made its presence felt around the perimeters of the campus. Nobody, however, was brought to justice for anything, certainly not the murders of Harry and Henrietta Moore.[1]

This was a part of Mary McLeod Bethune's world. She was deeply pained by the tragic bombing, especially having known Harry Moore and having his family so much a part of her college. She had fought such brutality throughout her career, but always as head of a respected entity. This was not the case then, for she had given up the leadership of her major organizational structures in the 1940's: the college in ‘42, although she held the presidency of a temporary basis in 1946-47; the Negro Division of the National Youth Administration in ‘44, where she had distinguished herself not only in youth affairs but as a leader of black America; and, then, the National Council of Negro Women in ‘49, through which she had led women leaders in breaking down barriers to civic participation

Bethune had accepted retirement with ample faith. She had known that her humanitarian spirit, fertile mind, and impulse towards action would probably keep her so busy that only illnesses would force her to rest, just as in the past. Youth, women, education, civil rights, and “the brotherhood of man,” were trademark causes. And even without a major office, this legendary woman continued to embrace them eagerly, demonstrating an exemplary citizenship. “Still Citizen Extraordinaire” features an overview of Bethune’s public life and several of her creative and transforming experiences during the 1950's. Additionally, it relates circumstances surrounding her death.

The Golden Years

As an icon of black pride in the 1950's, the Board of Education in Englewood, New Jersey, vilified Mary McLeod Bethune. It barred her from speaking at a local school on April 24, 1952, because she was an alleged communist. With the country having yielded to McCarthyism’s guilt by association, right wing groups enjoyed a field day besmirching the character of liberal Americans to discredit their leadership. Probably only the storm of national protest, led by the NAACP, caused the school board to accept Bethune’s categorical denial of subversive charges as sufficient grounds to lift the ban on her speaking. Fortunately, the galling Englewood ruckus for her was somewhat isolated.[2] Generally, Bethune enjoyed retirement. "The Golden Years" briefly surveys her major interests in the 1950's exclusive of gender advocacy, which was mostly channeled through the NCNW as indicated in the previous chapter. It considers Bethune's internationalism, promotion of integration, advancement of black economic institutions, focus on the federal establishment, and educational work.

Bethune believed that one of the two top issues in America at mid-century was "strengthening and sustaining the United Nations" so that it could foster "the unity essential to peace."[3] As an internationalist, in the 1950's she visited the Bahamas, Canada, and Liberia. Only the trip across the Atlantic, however, fulfilled a life-long dream. She tread the soil of Africa. Along with three other official delegates from the United States--Ambassador Edward R. Dudley, Major General James S. Stowell, and *Afro-American* newspaper publisher Carl Murphy--she attended the second inauguration of Liberian President William V.S. Tubman. Bethune crammed much into her eight days in the motherland, even organizing in Monrovia, the capital, a chapter of the National Council of Negro Women. At the time, Liberia and her Caribbean cousin Haiti were the only black republics on earth. When Bethune had visited the latter country in 1949, she was decorated with its highest award; while visiting Liberia, she received its parallel honor, the Order of the Star of Africa.[4]

Meshing together the international and national, this decorated woman's number one issue was "ending segregation and discrimination for ever," because it constituted "the first step to world peace." She applauded the landmark *Brown* Decision, for it was a step towards ending segregation. A year afterwards, as resistance mushroomed against it, she argued in her final

Chicago Defender column that the "U.S. Will Make 'The Grade' in Integrating All Its Schools" because "Integration of the races in public education is the only democratic way."[5] She believed that democracy was the best political system that humankind had devised, but it had failed to incorporate African Americans. Having allied with those endeavoring to open the system up in the Southern Conference Educational Fund, she found it "incredible that this organization together with two such staunch humanitarians as Aubrey Williams and James A. Dombrowski should be questioned concerning their democratic ideals by a man like James Eastland," a Mississippi Dixiecrat, who like others of his ilk, persisted in fundamentally perverting democratic principles and Christian ethics. Bethune made this a public declaration. Eastland had led the U.S. Senate Subcommittee in effectively smearing her friends as Communists because of their unequivocal stand for desegregation.[6] But Bethune had not simply pontificated on justice for friends; she had been in the trenches in Daytona Beach insuring the best circumstances for blacks to exercise their court-sanctioned right to attend cultural affairs in the municipal Peabody Auditorium. It was located on the peninsular side of the city, a locale traditionally off-limits to blacks in the evening unless employed there.[7]

As Bethune worked for integration, she also helped to build black institutions. This type of balance, described as integrated-autonomy, characterized her race leadership. Her institutions were not only non-profit, for she fervently believed that "as long as Negroes are hemmed into racial blocs by prejudice and pressure, it will be necessary for them to band together for economic betterment." She did this, especially with regard to the Central Life Insurance Company of Florida and the Bethune-Volusia Beach. From March to December 1951, after the death of business leader G.D. Rogers, Bethune was chief executive officer of the Central Life

Insurance Company of Florida, then a one and a half million dollar business, headquartered in Tampa. Of the thirteen founders of the enterprise in the 1920's, she was the last survivor. [8]

In contrast to her short leadership at Central Life, Bethune had a long, involved relationship with Bethune-Volusia Beach, a two and a half mile expanse of land fronting the Atlantic Ocean and extending back to the northern arm of the Indian River. It was located about twenty-four miles south of Bethune-Cookman College. With plans for a black resort, Bethune, G.D. Rogers, and two other partners had purchased the land in the 1940's for $125,000. Afterwards, they carved it into lots hawked among African Americans nationally. At a cost of $100,000, in 1952 Bethune and partners opened the two-story, cinder-block Welricha Motel, a getaway Bethune enjoyed. It, like this beach, welcomed all comers, regardless of race. Blacks, however, needed the resort because whites barred them from exceedingly long expanses of the Atlantic and Gulf coasts in Florida and other states. In Volusia County, anchored by Daytona Beach, African Americans had access to no public beach. Yet, unlike assistance to white developments, both financial institutions and local government discriminated against the Bethune-Volusia enterprise, making its development under black ownership highly problematic. Even so, Bethune held on until the day she died. [9]

While Bethune was unable to involve the federal government in her beach development, still, she like most African Americans expected it to help combat the burdens of discriminatory practices. Her strategy was to achieve access to federal officials through partisan politics. She participated in activities of Americans for Democratic Action and the National Democratic Party. She understood that the election of race liberals to strategic government positions was crucial to minority advancement. In 1950, therefore, she campaigned in two U.S. Senate races.

She supported California Congresswoman Helen Gahagan Douglas' bid for the Senate. While her candidate won in the Democratic Primary, in the general election she lost to Republican Richard M. Nixon. Bethune spent much more time in the U.S. senate re-election campaign of Herbert Lehman in New York, the state in which she was a registered voter, and was exhilarated when he won. Two years later, she voiced unequivocal support for the Democratic standard bearers Adlai Stevenson and John Sparkman, who were defeated by the Eisenhower-Nixon ticket.[10]

But before that occurred, Bethune was glad that a Democrat occupied the White House. With relative ease, she saw the President, both alone and in groups. Probably her most publicized visit occurred with eleven other black leaders. Labor leader A. Philip Randolph arranged it. They wanted the elimination of segregation in the nation's capital and in the army; appointments, not so much as consultants and advisers, but to government policy-making positions; appointments in the foreign and diplomatic service; and inclusion in the mushrooming jobs pertaining to the heated Korean War. With a Republican Congress refusing to budge on civil rights, the liberal and courageous Truman did what he could.[11] In a more personal way, as far as Bethune was concerned, the President appointed her not only as a U.S. representative to the Liberian inauguration, but also to the National Advisory Council of the Federal Civil Defense Administration, where she served from May 5, 1951, to November 24, 1951. Upon resigning, she submitted four names to Truman to consider as her replacement, all prominent NCNW members: Jeanetta W. Brown, Venice Spraggs, Eunice Hunton Carter, and Vivian Carter Mason.

In other federal service, Bethune worked as a consultant in the Farmers Home

Administration, lodged in the Department of Agriculture in Washington. Her friend Dillard B. Lasseter from the National Youth Administration hired her, beginning on November 29, 1950. She stayed on until July 19, 1951. By then, federal employment had become untenable, due to the climate promoted by Senator Joseph McCarthy's anticommunist witch hunt. Bethune was vulnerable because, as one informed individual put it, "In the early Thirties, she [Bethune] did lend her name to several organizations later proved to be [Communist] 'fronts,'" although no one ever charged that she knew they were Communist at the time.[12]

No red-baiting or anything else could stop Bethune, however, from promoting education, a cause universally identified with her. She continued her affiliation with Carter G. Woodson's Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. Historian Pero Gaglo Dagbovie notes that during her presidency of that organization from 1936 to 1952, "she did contribute significantly to the intellectual climate of the annual meetings; serve as a well-known representative, fund-raiser, and publicist for the Association; and support Woodson in his quest to popularize African American history."[13]

This remarkable woman also promoted the United Negro College Fund, a collective national campaign waged by ill-endowed private black colleges, beginning in 1943. As "a very staunch supporter of the Fund," Bethune sat on its Board of Directors, attending her last directors' annual meeting on March 19, 1955, at the Biltmore Hotel in New York. Of course, Bethune-Cookman College was a UNCF member. It joined before accredited, and therefore ineligible for membership. "But she [Bethune] brought it in anyway!," related Frederick D. Patterson, founder of UNCF.[14]

Even in retirement, Bethune hovered over her college like she was still running it. But the post World War II world was so different than when she had started the institution in 1904 with the legendary "five little girls, a dollar and a half, and faith in God." Had she been able to regain control again as in 1946, B-CC may have gone the way of Haines Normal and Industrial Institute in Augusta, Georgia. Its founder-principal, Lucy Laney, the premier black woman educator at the turn of the nineteenth century, held on to her creation virtually fifty years, presiding over both its flowering and decline. Sixteen years after her death in 1933, Haines officially closed and its building were razed.

In the 1950's, Mary McLeod Bethune found that she could not maneuver the trustees of B-CC as in yesteryear, even though they, as everybody else, were deferential in manner. This made for an anguished personal adjustment in private, from center stage as president to side stage as president-emeritus. Psychologically, she took almost a decade to find the right place. The adjustment culminated in 1952 after the B-CC Board of Trustees voted confidence in President Richard V. Moore, whom Bethune had attempted to ouster, as she had done Moore's competent predecessor, James A. Colston.[15] Bethune acknowledged a coming to terms with an honorary college role in her July 1952 *Christian Century* piece, "God Leads the Way, Mary." Here she seemingly depicted retirement from the B-CC presidency as a recent occurrence. A month later she confided to an intimate, "Things are going well with the College. I have released my responsibility and I am realizing more and more everyday that the best I could do has been done."[16] Even so, nobody could attract celebrities to the campus like Mary McLeod Bethune! Participating in the fiftieth anniversary of the college were baseball's hardy pioneer and star Jackie Robinson; writer, editor, columnist, lecturer Langston Hughes; contralto Marian Anderson; and Nobel Peace Prize Medalist Ralph Bunche. They came to honor Bethune.

Creative and Transforming Experiences

Women's Leadership Conference

Towards the end of her life, Mary Bethune believed as passionately as ever in the possibilities of women and the rewards to be gained from unity, even if only briefly. She wanted women from disparate backgrounds--assuredly different colors, creeds, and nationalities--to come together, share, work, and inspire each other to improve society. Toward that end in the late 1940's, she was behind a redefinition of the council as "an organization to unite in purpose and action millions of women, regardless of race, religion, national origin or ancestry;" and assuredly, she persuaded the NCNW to change the name of its quarterly from the *Aframerican Woman's Journal* to the more inclusive *Women United.* It went defunct, however, two years later. Next, she wanted it to trade-in the name of the organization for something new: the National Council of Women United. She still endeavored to sell the idea in 1953 at the last regular NCNW annual meeting she attended, and while the organization later voted for the name-change, that appellation never stuck.[17]

Even so, Bethune still had the pleasure of a leading role in convening female leaders from a representative group of associations to consider "Strengthening the Forces of Freedom." This Women's Leadership Conference, April 4-6, 1952, did not take place in Washington or New York, as so many of Bethune's triumphs, or on the West Coast or across the sea. It occurred at Bethune-Cookman College, which provided "an atmosphere of understanding and goodwill." Two years before the U.S. Supreme Court repudiated segregation, black and white women representing much of the organized, moderate women in the country, together with delegates from Turkey and Germany, responded to the call of a black woman to meet in the deep

South at a black institution.

Sisters, black and white, helped and encouraged Bethune to implement what she called "one of the largest undertakings of my life."[18] En route either to or from Liberia in January 1952, affirming to her in Paris that "American women in leadership positions would welcome an opportunity for joint discussion," as she proposed, were Eleanor Roosevelt, then the U.S. delegate to the United Nations General Assembly and Edith Sampson, U.S. alternate delegate to that body.[19] Later, Roosevelt backed out. Then, Bethune's Nobel Prize-winning friend Pearl Buck found she couldn't attend either. Some feared that while Bethune was a "big name," without a string of others the media would ignore the summit and therefore it should be postponed. Nevertheless, planning proceeded. When Chicagoan Stella Counselbaum of the Anti Defamation League of B'nai B'rith attended a planning meeting at the NCNW Council House, she was astonished with the "terrific job" NCNW members Marjorie Lawson and Margaret Butcher were doing in preparation for the conference. "Nothing I can say can adequately express the excellence of their activity," she old a friend. Then she lauded Arabella Denniston, whom she called "the Dean." "They [all three] are truly remarkably able women.[20] Among the several other talented NCNW personalities also preparing for conference were Vivian C. Mason, Eunice H. Carter, and Dorothy Height.

Furthermore, Bethune had gifted women mobilized for the meeting in other places, particularly, Daytona Beach. Her invitation to participants identified the Advisory Board of Bethune-Cookman College, as the affiliation of some. This group extended back to 1905, just as the institution's Trustee Board. This white majority body of women had always been an invaluable asset to Bethune's educational leadership. From it probably came the enthusiastic conference coordinator Hazel Wilson and others who facilitated the smooth execution of local arrangements for blacks and whites in a segregated city. Probably an undisclosed woman gave Bethune the funds to defray travel expenses for delegates needing assistance. Mrs. Samuel McCrae Cavert co-chaired the conference. Bethune's good friend, former Congresswoman Helen Gahagan Douglas, whom President Harry Truman had appointed to a U.N. commission gave the keynote address. Two other personages were on hand to provide international perspectives, Anna Lord Strauss and the NCNW's own Edith Sampson. In NCNW workshop-like forums, panelists addressed the theme with regard to education, employment, government, religious life, and family and community life. On the last day, a Palm Sunday, two women ministers--one black, the other white--conducted an inspiring service of dedication that helped to rekindle in all a sense that they could translate ideals into action.

Writer Ruth D. Wilson, a New York-based member of the B-CC Advisory Board and the NCNW, reported that 127 delegates registered and many others came as visitors. She described the assembly as follows.

> The delegates included leaders of Christian and Jewish religious organizations on both state and national levels, members of both the Democratic and Republican National Committees, labor leaders of the AFL and the CIO; executives of Committees on Race Relations in Chicago, Detroit and New York City; women in leading positions in education, business, journalism and the law; in art and literature; leaders in sororities and in women's organizations of both races and of interracial groups; representatives of the League of Women Voters, the Anti-Defamation League, the Southern Regional Council; of federal bureaus concerned with women, children, immigration, labor and education; representatives for the State Department and from the United Nations. Germany, Turkey and the Virgin Islands were represented.[21]

Although Mary McLeod Bethune had hoped for the best, she was amazed with the results. She explained to a friend, "I just could not imagine that we could have gathered together the type of women and the large number of women that we had here for that meeting. It was something extraordinary--something that has never happened before." Longtime Bethune secretary Arabella Denniston was less restrained. "We are jumping with joy here," she wrote from Washington. "Have reported profusely on the conference itself, the beauty of the college, the hospitality of the college family and friends, the generosity of the people in the community and the cooperation of all the local citizens." Like many others, Denniston believed that no other woman at the conference, could have called for such a gathering and received the excellent response that her "GRAND LADY" had.[22]

Perhaps typical of its significance to most, especially those having little personal contact with Bethune, was the reaction of Dorothy MacLeod, General Director of United Church Women of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S. She wrote, "Please let me say how very worthwhile I felt your Conference was. I marvel at how many leaders you were able to assemble in such a short time. I do not know anyone else who would have accomplished what you did in getting together representatives of so many organizations." She continued, "May I thank you for letting me attend, in addition to Mrs. [James D.] Wyker [Chairperson of United Church Women]. It was a rich experience for me and I was glad to share in it, for now Mrs. Wyker and I can plan more carefully together for the work of United Church Women in relation to this total group of women leaders. . . . MacLeod concluded, "Please know that we are eager to work closely with you. We shall welcome suggestions from you at any time. Personally it was a joy to be closely associated with you."[23]

Bethune Foundation [24]

Whereas the Women's Leadership Conference was as an exhilarating, one-shot creative effort, Mary McLeod Bethune took an active interest in developing her namesake foundation, physically her Daytona Beach home, from 1952 until her death. Influencing Bethune to undertake the project in a general sense were her perennial desire for African Americans to build and control viable institutions and the dozen or so years she served as a trustee of "Cedar Hill," the Frederick Douglass Estate in Washington. The foundation continues to impact the present in ways similar to that of the Bethune Council House. Bethune's residences in both Daytona and Washington preserve the physical setting she inhabited and both house valuable archives. The Bethune Foundation manuscript collection in Daytona Beach, the most significant of Bethune's scattered papers, documents black life and race relations in the U.S. roughly from the death of Booker T. Washington in 1915 to the emergence of Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1955. Unlike the Bethune Council House in Washington, the foundation is not a National Historic Site. The National Park Service designated it, however, a National Historic Landmark in 1975. Originally independent, it became a part of Bethune-Cookman College in 1959.

Built in 1914, the foundation building, a modest, two-story, white frame home was valued in the early 1950's at $40,000. In style it appears to be a cross between a bungalow and a colonial. Even though the rooms are small by today's standards, the dinning room, master bedroom, and guest bedroom hold heavy formal furniture. Bethune deeded this, her homestead property, to the foundation, a charitable and educational corporation. Its objectives were to insure the preservation of the home, to perpetuate her ideas, to contribute scholarships to B-CC students, and to foster interracial goodwill. Most fundamentally, Bethune hoped that the foundation would inspire people to achieve positive goals. Other motives prompting its establishment were Bethune's need for easy access to her papers to write an autobiography, which never materialized; the need to be in control of a major project; and the need for continuous ego gratification. Even so, the foundation defied challenge because it showcased an extraordinarily fruitful life. Friends recognized this fact through support, especially NCNW member Marjorie S. Joyner and her Beauty School Owners and Teachers Association in conjunction with its affiliate, the Alpha Chi Pi Omega Sorority and Fraternity. From them and other sources, the foundation raised about $18,000 in 1954.

The foundation developed at a time when the country still honored the "separate but equal" way of life and democratic and communist antipathies continued to stoke the Korean Conflict. While it staged a conventional on-site dedication on Sunday, May 10, 1953, a big coming-out gala, in the form of a dinner, had occurred about two months earlier, in conjunction with the annual meeting of the B-CC Board of Trustees. On this occasion, trustee Eleanor Roosevelt, a first-time Bethune houseguest, declared, "This country has become the symbol of democracy. People don't ask you what you mean by democracy in America," she contended. "The way we live at home writes the meaning of democracy for them. So a foundation such as Mrs. Bethune is creating tonight will be an example of what democracy offers to people." Globe-trotting Roosevelt even predicted, "This foundation will help the Brotherhood of man in the World."

Undoubtedly, Bethune agreed. Dressed in black velvet, accessorized with honorary medals and ribbons, she announced, "The Trustees [of the Foundation] will guard your gifts but I won't let them tie my hands. This is my vision. . . . I shall do what I want to do to make it grow up successfully." The hometown audience laughed and applauded. She had spoken true to form.

Moral Re-Armament

"I have longed to know the peoples of the world. I have longed to feel that I am just a human being, just one among the great creation of mankind," Mary Bethune told a world assembly in Caux, Switzerland, on July 27, 1954. "Here I have found no sign of segregation [and] discrimination. 'You have to go through the back door while I go through the front door. You can't have a cup of tea, hear this music, go into this park here.' These are words of a segregated nation," she said. Then contrasting that with the spirit of the Swiss mountain-top retreat she had visited for two weeks, Bethune asserted, "Under God we have the peoples of the world who have united their hearts and their minds in such a way that we feel as one." Having experienced this Shangrila, she expressed her sense of spiritual unity with all present. "*To be part of the great uniting force of our age is* THE CROWING EXPERIENCE OF OUR LIFE."

Bethune had been discussing Moral Re-Armament at its headquarters. Growing out of the Oxford Group, known for "religious house parties" generating high emotional excitement, MRA was a philosophical movement that U.S. Lutheran clergyman Frank Buchman (1878-1961), had founded in 1938. This conservative worldwide, anti-communist movement endeavored to prevent wars and other conflicts by having one individual at a time change his or her heart, reminiscent of Christianity's "born again" imperative, although MRA worked with people of all religious faiths. It stressed adherence to absolute moral standards: honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. Apparently one could feel MRA better than explaining it, for Bethune noted in her mountaintop speech that it was an "ideology, the something that we all feel will bring mankind together everywhere, if they will only believe and act."[25]

Nevertheless, MRA had its critics. Some believed that social and economic evils could not be eradicated by changing individuals alone: collective action to alter the structures of society had to take place too, a fact that MRA ignored. The organization spent big money conducting its regimented, introspective assemblies, including paying for transportation and all other expenses for virtually all guests. Yet it refused to disclose funding sources. For these and other reasons, skeptics viewed MRA as an opulently financed, high-rolling movement which deceived as well as enlightened.[26]

Ignoring skeptics, Mary McLeod Bethune embraced MRA whole-heartedly. At Caux, she had examined herself, listened for the direction of God, and found that she was wanting. The experience transformed her. Many friends and acquaintances noticed. Using TELEFACT, she told her National Council members about it. "You know, I thought I was so unselfish. I was applauded into the belief that I was a great leader--just and pure and honest and loved," she confessed. "But I realize how much of what I did was for my own glorification. . . . I want to do all I can now to make right all of the wrongs." Humbly and sincerely, Bethune went forth trying to mend broken fences. She started with her son, Albert McLeod Bethune, Sr., 55, acknowledging that she had neglected him in favor of public service. Many friends commented on the profound change in her.[27]

Literary Legacy

In the last year of life, Mary McLeod Bethune continued the journey of reflection that had begun in Switzerland. She penned her most thoughtful and celebrated work, "My Last Will and Testament," a literary legacy first published in *Ebony* in August 1955. Since then, that magazine has republished it several times, various other publications have done likewise, countless hand-outs have come off duplicating machines, and many have intoned it at African American functions.

In the "Last Will," Bethune identified nine principles that had guided her long career and accounted for her "making-it" in the midst of American apartheid. One indication that these were her personal tried and true standards was the omission of a statement on the importance of the family, particularly at a time when mainstream trend-setters were pitching the virtues of domesticity. Bethune's introduced her principles interestingly, and then begins to state them in words memorable to many. "I leave you love. Love builds. It is positive and helpful. It is more beneficial than hate," she declared. "Personally and racially, our enemies must be forgiven. Our aim must be to create a world of fellowship and justice where no man's skin, color or religion, is held against him. . . . Loving your neighbor means being interracial, interreligious and international." Bethune's first career preoccupation was her last principle. "I leave you finally a responsibility to our young people," she asserted. "The world around us really belongs to youth. . . Our children must never lose their zeal for building a better world. They must not be discouraged from aspiring toward greatness," she wrote. "We have a powerful potential in our youth, and we must have the courage to change old ideas and practices so that we may direct their power toward good ends."[28]

An analytical summary of all the maxims on which Bethune staked her life, written by this historian for *Mary McLeod Bethune: Building a Better World*, follows. Bethune's nine-point legacy may be "categorized into three frames of reference. The first covers attributes of character central to society's spiritual ideals: namely, faith hope and love. The second comprises society's crucial cultural responsibilities, consisting of a 'thirst for education;' 'a respect for the uses of power,' or collective political action to promote democracy; and 'a responsibility to young people,' meaning the nurture of youth. The third category incorporates principles of holistic living essential for the maturity of the black race as America's most challenged minority. These are 'racial dignity,' the core of which is facing whites as equals; 'a desire to live harmoniously with your fellow men,' that is, attempting to cultivate positive relations with whites; and 'the challenge of developing confidence in one another,' or supporting self-help businesses." Through the "Last Will and Testament" in conjunction with the fruitfulness of her life, citizen extraordinaire Mary McLeod Bethune appeals to others across the boundaries of color, race, religion, country, and time to act, as did she, to build a better world.[29]

Into Immortality

On Wednesday, May 18, 1955, after a day's work at her desk and a satisfying fish dinner, Mrs. Bethune, 79, died suddenly of a heart attack at 6:15 p.m. at her Daytona Beach residence. Arabella S. Denniston, Bethune's former secretary, closest confidante, and alter ego later conveyed such information to friends. Arabella had arrived in Daytona from Washington, about twelve hours after Bethune's death. She went directly to the deceased's home, once named the Retreat but then called the Mary McLeod Bethune Foundation. There she stayed. This proud graduate of Bethune's girl school, NCNW life member, but most of all, like a loving Bethune daughter, wrote of the circumstances surrounding her mentor's passing. Her narration is recounted here in part, only little supplemented by other data.

Almost immediately after physicians confirmed Bethune's death, the college bell tolled and surrounding church bells joined in. In silence seven hundred and seventy students encircled Bethune's home for nearly an hour. The next morning, the College President, Arabella, and local Bethune confidants Bertha Loving Mitchell, Charles Francis, and Maxwell Saxon planned the funeral program. B-CC teachers and staff and members of the Women's Advisory Board of the college performed other essential chores, with Henrine Ward Banks, Dean of Women and NCNW devotee, handling "the housing arrangements for the many, many people from all over the country." After all was said and done, Arabella would declare, "Too much cannot be said of President Moore and his staff for their tireless efforts and complete cooperation."

On Sunday, "dressed in a white shroud with a purple tipped white orchid at her shoulder, white gloves, and white shoes," Bethune looked as if she were sleeping peacefully. With an honor guard, she laid in state at her home. While the local morning daily reported "an estimated 2,500 persons filed past" Bethune's bier on Sunday, Arabella stated that more than four thousand signed the condolence book that day, exclusive of thousands of children. People came late into night. On Sunday evening, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority conducted its ritual for their honorary member. On Monday morning, the National Council of Negro Women took its turn. Members held a quiet hour with their Founder. At one-thirty, the funeral procession started the short walk on campus to the White Hall auditorium.

At 2:00 p.m. college President Richard V. Moore began impressive home-going services befitting a great lady. It consisted of songs, prayer, scripture, expressions, obituary, and eulogy Daytona Beach native, Howard Thurman, Dean of Marsh Chapel at Boston University--the husband of NCNW stalwart Sue Bailey Thurman--delivered the eulogy. A solid bank of flowers flanked Bethune's bronze sealer casket. The auditorium was filled to capacity. Outside its west entrance, a thousand more individuals sat in chairs and hundreds more stood listening over loud speakers to the services. The *Daytona Beach Morning Journal* estimated mourners as "some

3,500;" the *Memphis World* put them at "over 5,000."

By the recessional, male students in dark suits, "formed a double chain passageway," from the auditorium to the grass covered mound located near the rear of Bethune foundation, where Mary McLeod Bethune would be interred beneath the ground she loved so dearly. "Young ladies of the college, dressed in white, were flower bearers." "A BEAUTIFUL PICTURE!" Arabella exclaimed. "To the soft, beautiful strains of 'The Lord's Prayer,' burial ceremonies were read by Dr. James C. Murray, Mrs. Bethune's pastor. She was buried." "Thunder rolled a subdued but dramatic background to the burial service and rain mingled with the tears" of many leaving the site, reported the local morning daily. "Until the early hours of the morning, spectators were coming to see the grave: some to pray, some to weep, while others simply stared."[30]

On Thursday, May 19th, the day after Bethune's death, a grieved Adam Clayton Powell, representative from the Twenty-second Congressional District, eulogized her in the 84th Congress. "We have truly lost one whose great and gentle influence has shaped our lives over many years. The people of America have lost the keen mind, the rich wisdom, and the infinite courage of a woman who has contributed so much to her country," he proclaimed. One of only two African Americans in Congress, this New Yorker continued, probably remembering that when he entered that body, Bethune had sat with his father.

> The life of Mary McLeod Bethune was so fruitful, so varied, and so beneficial to her people and to her country that one cannot even attempt to measure her loss. We know only that it is beyond calculation. . .
>
> The life of Mary McLeod Bethune will forever serve the people of the United States as a profound source

> of inspiration. Had she succeeded in but one of her many fields of interest, she would have made a great contribution. But her successes were many because her interests were many and varied and because she worked and fought for them with determination, wisdom, and infinite courage.
>
> To her family. . . . Be comforted in your sorrow by the knowledge that, although a great and noble person has passed away, the rich works of her hands and heart will endure forever, and she will be eternally cherished and loved by all upon whose life she touched.

When others heard of Bethune's death, telegrams, cards, resolutions, and letters poured into the NCNW Council House, just as they did to the Bethune Foundation. NCNW national affiliates, metropolitan councils, officers, and members wrote. The NAACP, National Urban League, Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, and other race improvement organizations tendered condolences. So did the National Council of Women of the United States, National Council of Catholic Women, and other female groups across the color line that had networked with Bethune and the NCNW. Led by the Liberian Ambassador to the U.S., various segments of the international community noted her passing too, And politicians, college presidents, and others who knew Bethune, from Eleanor Roosevelt on down, communicated their sense of loss to the NCNW. Black women journalists weighed in through their respective periodicals. Toki Schalk Johnson of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, probably summed up their thoughts and those of many others in remarking, "There will always be women with the same inspiring attributes--desires--[and] ambitions [as those of Mary McLeod Bethune], but never again will one of them be as hard pressed . . ."

From their great fount of experience with Bethune, former NCNW president Dorothy B. Ferebee and President Vivian Carter Mason informed the public of their thoughts and feelings.

"In the passing of Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune, the peoples of the world have sustained a great loss," Ferebee announced. "Wherever she walked, she left the mark of a truly great spirit, unconsciously inspiring in others an emulation of her own great powers and personality. She believed passionately and completely in the power of people drawn together in the quest of a goal of human advancement," she maintained. "Those of us privileged to work close to her gained insights to new challenges and inner strengths to meet them."

Council President Mason, who like NCNW devotee Marjorie S. Joyner spoke at the funeral, stated that Bethune "drew people to her like a magnet, for the magic of her voice and heroic stature of her dreams and ideas fired men and women alike, for she deemed no problem too difficult to resolve nor any height too steep for her to climb. . . ." Mason contended, "She fought for civil and human rights with every weapon at her command. . . . Her strongest armor was the genuine love and charity she held for all people. . . She overcame the overwhelming forces of life by reason of her faith in God, her faith in people and her belief in the ultimate destiny of America as a moral force in world affairs. . . .She has taken her place among the immortals."[31]

While those who knew Mary McLeod Bethune were impelled to convey her character and accomplishments, Bethune, herself, had indicated what she was about through many memorable statements. Her challenge to the 1952 Women's Leadership Conference imparted a measure of her drive and vision. She had proclaimed:

> Let us build the world of our dreams
> A world with freedom blessed
> The world with justice at its heart
> To hope and love addressed.
> A world that cares

That heals the sick
That comforts
Lifts, inspires, and shares--

That on the heritage of truth
Will point a better way to youth.
A world where the abundant life
Will take the place of sin and strife
Where peace of mind and inner strength
Will be the opportunity
For all who seek and will it so
So let us dream and work and plan,
For a world of love
For every man.[32]

Notes

1. *Daytona Beach Evening News*, December 26, 1951, 1, December 27, 1951, 6; *Daytona Beach Morning Journal*, January 2, 1952, 1; *New York Times*, December 28, 1951, 13; Gloster B. Current, "Martyr for a Cause," *The Crisis* (February, 1952), 73-79. Interview with B.J. Moore, Daytona Beach, December 28, 2002.

2. Elaine M. Smith, "Mary McLeod Bethune's Last Will and Testament: A Legacy for Race Vindication," *Journal of Negro History*, 81 (1996), 107-108.

3. Bethune quoted from Elaine M. Smith, "Introduction: The Last Years," Mary McLeod *Bethune: Building a Better World*," ed., Audrey Thomas McCluskey and Elaine M. Smith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 259.

4. "Tubman Sworn in Again by Liberia," *New York Times*, January 9, 1952; George C. McGhee [Assistant Secretary of State] to Bethune, November 30, 1951, BF.

5. Smith, "Last Years," 259; Bethune, "U.S. Will Make 'the Grade' in Integrating All Its Schools," in *Bethune: Building a Better World*, ed., McCluskey and Smith, 274.

6. Bethune, "Probe of Southern Conference Educational Fund Shocks Writer," April 17, 1954, in *Bethune: Building a Better World*, ed., McCluskey and Smith, 279-281.

7. Leroy F. Harlow, *Without Fear or Favor: Odyssey of a City Manager* (Salt Lake City: Brigham Young University Press, 1977), 255-261.

8. "Mrs. Bethune Resigns as Insurance Executive in Fla.," undated newspaper article, Claude Barnett Papers, Chicago Historical Society; Income Statement of the Central Life

Insurance Company of Florida for the Year Ending, December 31, 1950, BF, showed assets as $1,583,740.64.

9. Smith, "Bethune's Last Will," 113-115.

10. Smith, "Last Years," 260.

11. "Statement to President Truman at the White House Conference," February 28, 1951, in *Bethune: Building a Better World*, ed., McCluskey and Smith, 264-266.

12. Bethune's Federal Personnel Record, Private Collection; Bethune to Harry S. Truman, November 24, 1951, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Official File, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri; Quote from Patsy Graves to Claude Barnett, July 13, 1951, Claude Barnett Papers, Bethune File, Chicago Historical Society.

13. Pero Gaglo Dagbovie, "Black Women, Carter G. Woodson, and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1915-1950," *Journal of African American History*, 88 (Winter 2003), 32.

14. Frederick Patterson, *Chronicles of Faith: The Autobiography of Frederick D. Patterson* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991), 145-146.

15. Resolutions of the Board of Trustees of Bethune-Cookman College, Annual Meeting, March 19-20, 1952, Richard V. Moore Papers, Bethune-Cookman College Archives; Sheila Y. Flemming, *The Answered Prayer to a Dream: Bethune-Cookman College, 1904-1994* (Virginia Beach: Donning Co., 1995), 77-79, documents Bethune's actions in removing James Colston.

16. Bethune, "God Leads the Way, Mary," *Christian Century*, July 23, 1952, 851-852; Bethune to Mrs. A.R. Howard, August 28, 1952, BF.

17. Quote from NCNW Brochure, undated, NCNW Vertical File, Alabama State University; *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 21, 1953, 8. Audio recording of the NCNW's Brotherhood Luncheon, February 26, 1955, Schomburg Center. At this luncheon, President Vivian Mason announced that at its last meeting the organization had voted to change its name.

18. Bethune to Vivian Carter Mason, April 29, 1952, BF, Part 1, Reel 17.

19. Bethune to Nannie Burroughs, February 14, 1952, Nannie Helen Burroughs Papers, 3, Library of Congress.

20. Stella Counselbaum to Hazel Wilson, February 26, 1952, BF, Part 1, Reel 17.

21. Ruth Danenhower Wilson, "Women's Leadership Conference," TELEFACT, April 1952, 3.

22. Bethune to Constance Daniels, April 10, 1952, BF, Part 1, Reel 17; Bethune, "What the Year 1953 Means to Me,"undated statement for publication, BF, Part 2, Reel 3; Arabella Denniston to Bethune, April 8, 1952, BF, Part 1, Reel 18.

23. Mrs. W. Murdoch [Dorothy] MacLeod to Bethune, April 23, 1952, BF, Part 1, Reel 18.

24. This summary of foundation development is based on Elaine M. Smith, "Introduction: The Mary McLeod Bethune Foundation--Origins, Vicissitudes, and Prospects," Guide to the Microfilm Edition of Mary McLeod Bethune Papers: The Bethune Foundation Collection, Part 1 (Bethesda: University Publications of America, 1997) v-x; also used was Bethune to Hazel T. Wilson, August 11, 1954, BF, Part 2, Reel 13.

25. Bethune, "Address to a World Assembly for Moral Re-Armament," [Italics and capitalization in the original statement.] July 27, 1954, in *Bethune: Building a Better World*, ed., McCluskey and Smith, 56-58.

26. The comprehensive critique of MRA is Tom Driberg, *The Mystery of Moral Re-Armament* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965).

27. Bethune quoted from Smith, "Introduction: Bethune Foundation," vii; Bethune, "Address to a World Assembly," 57; Interview with B.J. Moore, Daytona Beach, December 28, 2002; Elizabeth McDuffie, "FDR was My Boss" manuscript, undated, although a version of the manuscript was published in *Ebony*, April 1952, Elizabeth and Irvin McMuffie Papers, Clark-Atlanta University Library.

28. Bethune, "My Last Will and Testament," in *Bethune: Building a Better World*, ed., McCluskey and Smith, 58-61.

29. Smith, "Last Years," 261.

30. Arabella Denniston to "Friends," undated [1955], Private Collection, supplemented in a few details by the following: "2,500 Pay Tribute to Dr. Bethune," *Daytona Beach Morning Journal*, May 23, 1955, 1, and Dotti Einhorn, "Thousands Pay Respects to Dr. Bethune," *DBMJ*, May 24, 1955, 1; LeRoy M. (Spike) Washington, "Thousands Mourn, Pay Tribute to Mrs. Bethune," *Florida Star* [Jacksonville], May 28, 1955, 1; and *Memphis World*, May 27, 1955, 1.

31. TELEFACT, May 1955, Special Edition, 1, 7, Private Collection. This issue carried tributes to Bethune from numerous people which the NCNW received at the time of her passing; the observation from Toki Schalk Johnson appeared in her column, "Toki Types," *Pittsburgh*

Courier, May 28, 1955, 10.

32. Bethune, "A Serious Call to Women of Valour," Women's Leadership Conference, April 4, 1952, BF.

Chapter 7

Council House and the Public

Introduction

Mary McLeod Bethune and the National Council of Negro Women wanted a representative place where people could get to know African American women, their past, their present, and their aspirations for the future. For them, that place was their headquarters building, at 1318 Vermont Avenue Northwest, Washington, D.C., now named the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site. While the facility is no longer owned or controlled by the council and certainly no longer serves as its headquarters, nevertheless, one of the council's original purposes for the edifice remains in tact and looms ever larger with the passage of time. That objective was to showcase a history of black women. This concluding section of the Historic Resource Study focuses on that purpose by identifying ways the facility could infuse greater meaning into the history of the 1935-1955 period as Bethune and the NCNW experienced it, particularly for those who visit and for young residents in the nation's capital. It is this historian's understanding that such wide-ranging observations are part and parcel of a resource study. These views are offered only from the perspectives of a scholar and teacher.

Almost always, at the conclusion of a study of this nature the author sees research areas that remain unexplored either because they are beyond the scope of the study or because of time constraints for the work. Regarding the former, for example, "Connections between the National Council of Negro Women and the National Association of Colored Women, 1935-1955" and "The NCNW in the Black Press" would be in order; for the latter, a comprehensive investigation of Bethune in retirement; an in-depth probe of Bethune and the council in relation to the world's darker women, or white women, or in relation to the issues that they adopted; the work of NCNW regional directors; and case studies of the impact of the national council office on the activity of exemplary local chapters or national affiliates. Hopefully, this Historic Resource Study will be suggestive of other research topics. But beyond these suggestions for investigations, offered here are maxims that should govern the interpretation of the Council House to the public; "leads for future collection and project development;" and for visual effect and documentary purposes, captioned Council House post cards.

Governing Principles

The primary principles that should govern the interpretation of the Council House to the public are planting Bethune squarely in Washington, D.C.; presenting Bethune and the council within balanced gender and race perspectives; and achieving factual accuracy in all things. The Council House does not exist because Mary McLeod Bethune developed her small elementary school into a respectable senior college in Daytona Beach, Florida, as concrete and fascinating as that story truly is! It exists in part because of ceaseless activity of Bethune and a small group of like-minded race sisters to establish a sustained black female political and social presence in mainstream Washington, a presence previously lacking. That is equally fascinating, although less concrete and therefore, more difficult to communicate. Nevertheless, in terms of the Council House, what occurred in Florida under Bethune's leadership is background. What happened in the nation's capital under it is the foreground. In line with this thinking, an exhibit at the Council House on black women in education involving Bethune, for example, should feature her unprecedented work in the National Youth Administration.

Aside from a priority on a Washington-centered frame of reference for presenting Bethune, the public should be acquainted with the gender and race perspectives which were integral to the reality of Bethune and the NCNW. It is impossible to appreciate their accomplishment without an acknowledgment of the gender-race divide in Washington and the country during the time-frame of this study. Knowing that black women seldom entertained white women, for example, casts another dimension on the council's receptions for honored women, which witnessed the First Lady, Congresswomen, and other white women prominent in civic affairs in a black home (Council House) to mix and mingle with black honorees and the owners of the home, NCNW members. In another vein, it should be noted that as a group, white women, like white men, tended not to support structural societal changes that would give black women equal opportunity. This is especially glaring during World War II when it appears as if so many white women were perfectly willing to be a part of the new female navy, marines, coast guard, and some auxiliary services when black women were denied similar opportunities.

Gender and race perspectives, however, do not apply only to whites, but blacks as well. Often times black men in Washington, for example, did not consider it a priority to assist black women in securing professional government employment as they had obtained. Moreover, it took more than Bethune to accomplish NCNW objectives. While the council could never identify the 800,000 members that Bethune usually claimed, still strong women stood with the Founder-President. Where possible, representative women should be emphasized too, such as the likes of Dorothy Ferebee, Vivian Carter Mason, Clara B. Bruce, Carita V. Roane, Florence Norman, Dorothy Height, Jeanetta Welch Brown, Mame Mason Higgins, Anna Arnold Hedgeman, Elsie Austin, Ruth Mueller, Ruth Scott, Addie W. Hunton, Mary Church Terrell, Mabel K. Staupers, Estelle Massey Osborne, Daisy Lampkin, Addie W. Dickerson, Marjorie Stewart Joyner, Lucy D. Slowe, Abby Johnson, Bessye Bearden, Mary J. McCrorey, Sue Bailey Thurman, Arabella Denniston, Ethel Ramos Harris, Alma Illery, Audley Moore, Arenia Mallory, Edith Sampson, Eunice H. Carter, Sadie Alexander, Harriet C. Hall, Eleanor C. Dailey, and Vada Sommerville. The lack of a proper gender perspective is most evident in the six striking postcards sold in the Council House souvenir shop. Two are beautiful color photographs: one of the Council House; the other, the Bethune statue in Lincoln Park. Two cards feature Bethune with one or more individuals: the first, with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt; the second with President Harry Truman and eleven other black leaders, all men. Two other post cards render Bethune standing alone: one, at the White House gate; the other, with the nation's capitol building behind her. Copies of postcards are the next division of this chapter. Not one of the six cards showcases Bethune with a single black NCNW member. This is a lack of balance, considering that the Council House site should project not only Bethune, but also, black women of her era.

In addition to grounding Bethune in the capital city and presenting her and the council with due regard to gender and race perspectives, the third principle desirable in interpreting the Council House to the public is factual accuracy in all things--literature, exhibits, oral presentations, audio and video instruments, hand-outs and the like. Sometimes that means adhering strictly to a set of facts presented or reinterpreting them within a broader understanding of Bethune and the NCNW. Although the identification for the attractive photograph of Mary Bethune and Eleanor Roosevelt on the Council House postcard is partially missing in the NCNW Papers, still there are the words "this testimonial . . . honoring her [Bethune] thirty-eight years as president of Bethune-[Cookman] College." Also in the identification is a notation of Bethune's successor as B-CC president and an identification of ER.[1] Somehow, in the caption on the postcard, this became Bethune speaking "at Bethune-Cookman College's 35th anniversary celebration," which occurred on February 18, 1940, in Daytona Beach. The former, or original identification was correct. The photograph was taken on March 8, 1943, at Asbury Methodist Church in Washington, D.C., in recognition of Bethune's thirty-eight years as the head of B-CC. This was part of a three-city lecture tour that Eleanor Roosevelt and on one or two occasions Pearl S. Buck, winner of Pulitzer and Nobel prizes in literature, were making with Bethune to raise funds for the perennially strapped B-CC.[2] If this were an isolated example of the Council House fostering inaccurate information, perhaps, it could be overlooked, but it is not.

Understandably, the Council House is handicapped in consistently projecting facts about Bethune because relatively few documented studies exists. In fact, fewer than a dozen scholars have published substantive work on phases of Bethune's work. Considerably less have focused on Bethune and the NCNW. Consequently, the Council House has had to rely on undocumented secondary sources, with more than average misstatements resulting. Perhaps the most common and significant misstatement it perpetuates is that Bethune was an adviser to four U.S. presidents: Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Harry S. Truman. This can be traced to Rackham Holt's 1964 idealized, superficial, and undocumented Bethune biography, probably the single volume that has been most consulted for Bethune data. But Holt was confused when she wrote, "In the fall of 1928, she [Bethune] received a letter from the White House saying that President Calvin Coolidge was calling a Child Welfare Conference and asking her to attend." Holt then related Bethune's impression of Coolidge and the nature of the conference.[3] The truth is that the only presidents convening White House Conferences on the child as of December 1, 1930, according to *Time* magazine on that date, were Theodore Roosevelt (1909), Woodrow Wilson (1919), and Herbert Hoover (1930). Holt mistakenly attributes to a phantom Coolidge conference, Bethune's experiences at Hoover's conference on "Child Health and Protection," November 19-22, 1930. Bethune, however, did meet President Coolidge on May 7, 1925, when he entertained the U.S. contingent to the Sixth Quinquennial Convention of the International Council of Women at the White House. Holt got it right when she declared that at the time Bethune met Coolidge at the White House, "He greeted formally the hundred or so women assembled there." Note the absence of male guests.[4] At that time she formed the *unfavorable* opinion of him that Rackham Holt recorded. Bethune could not have been his adviser!

Moreover, it is a stretch to say that Bethune was an adviser to even three U.S. presidents. The primary support for asserting that Bethune advised Herbert Hoover was attendance at two of his White House conferences: the one on Child Welfare and Protection; the other on Home Building and Home Ownership the next year. At the former alone, 1,200 delegates attended. Thus she advised Hoover only as thousands upon thousands of others did. Probably the only time that she saw him in a small group was with a few black leaders who visited the White House on December 5, 1929, at noon.[5]

Bethune was an informal presidential adviser--in the sense of personal access to the chief executive--to two presidents: Franklin Roosevelt, and Harry Truman. Bethune's role as an adviser to FDR is generally known. And, Truman freely acknowledged that she counseled him. In 1950, he noted her "outstanding but completely selfless contributions to the common weal." Furthermore, he contended, "Distinguished has been your service to the national Government as a trusted adviser to me and my predecessor. In war and in peace you have met all calls to duty faithfully and well." Within a month after his grand inauguration the previous year, Bethune had told friend Constance Daniel, "President Truman called me to see him last Monday. Think of that. I had a good talk with him. . ." Even though advising only two presidents, Bethune's stature remains in tact, for she significantly impacted the country in other ways as well.[6]

The greatest concentration of inaccurate Bethune information at the Council House is in the orientation video on Bethune. Made in 1994, *Mary McLeod Bethune: Educator* is in the Black Americans of Achievement Video Collection II series. *Developing a new orientation video is the most urgent need of the Council House in projecting Bethune to the public.* It is unseemly for a federal agency to perpetuate misstatements about the NCNW Founder, especially when the effect is to attribute to her false accomplishments. The current video does this. In addition to incongruities between screen images and accompanying narrative, this historian spotted about twenty misleading declarations. Informed scholars could have been consulted to avoid them. For example, the video asserts that Bethune turned the tables of the Ku Klux Klan to pave the way for the *first* black public schools in Daytona. If the film-makers had glanced at the local City Directory, 1900-1902, they would have known that a public school for black Daytona existed then; had they consulted the Federal Writers Project for Daytona they would have learned that a public school for area blacks extended back into the nineteenth century.[7]

Bethune only arrived in Daytona in 1904. As the black public school might suggest, this pioneering lady came to Daytona because African Americans fared relatively well there when measured against most other small towns in Florida.

Leads for the Future

As stated in the document undergirding this work, the study should offer "leads for future collection and project development," which it does. As mentioned above, a new orientation video is needed immediately! In addition to communicating accurate information, it could plant Bethune squarely in Washington and give due recognition to gender and race perspectives, including a presentation of Bethune, not as a lone ranger, but in tandem with other ebony women who helped to position the NCNW in the social and political life of the capital. It could feature the Bethune Council House, its notable activities during 1944-1955, and project a "Daybreak in Civic Affairs" for African American women. Suitable projects this Resource Study suggest relative to exhibits and/or brochures, in particular, include: "The NCNW and its Issues," "NCNW Heroines: Annual 'Roll of Honor,' 1945-1949," "The NCNW and the Female Military," and "Suited for the NCNW Presidency: The Black Press Speculates in 1949." Moreover, the Council House could develop a photographic history of Bethune and the NCNW. Perhaps, it could become a traveling exhibit or one that could be reproduced for venues dealing with women's history. Other "leads for future collection and project development" are stated below.

1. A list of all manuscript collections of women prominent in the NCNW, 1935-1955. The list could note also pertinent vertical files and allied collections, especially the papers of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs in Washington. This project could start with a

statement of the collections at the Bethune Council House and other repositories in Washington; and the several collections of Mary McLeod Bethune--the Mary McLeod Bethune Foundation, Bethune-Cookman College Archives, Amistad Research Center at Tulane University, Fisk University Archives, and the Florida State Archives in Tallahassee. It could branch out by listing those at the Schomburg Center for Research and Black Culture, namely, the Bessye Bearden Papers, and the separate vertical files for the NCNW and Bethune. From the Schlesinger Library for Women's History at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Women's Studies in Boston could come the collections of Edith Sampson and Charlotte Hawkins Brown. Then, the papers of NCNW members in all other cities could be added, including those of Eleanor Roosevelt and other non-black NCNW life members. Had such a listing been available, the papers of Marjorie Stewart Joyner in Chicago would not have been overlooked in this study.

2. A complete run of the *Aframerican Woman's Journal*. Since history is as much about the thoughts of people as their actions, and the NCNW showcased its ideas and interests in its official organ, it is of importance that all issues of the *Aframerican Woman's Journal*, later known as *Women United*, be available at the Bethune Council House, along with a listing of all issues. Such ready access to this quarterly would aid significantly in systematically captioning unidentified or incompletely identified photographs in the extensive NCNW photograph files because many of them appeared in the journal. Moreover, scholars would find it a valuable reference tool for varied investigations. Seemingly, the NCNW Papers already contain almost all issues. The project could involve determining what "a complete run"is because, sometimes, issues were combined and maybe missed. Then it could survey libraries, archives, older NCNW members, or locate the missing issues in other ways and then acquire the originals or copies.

3. Mary McLeod Bethune's Washington. This would involve placing on a map of Washington the sites associated with Bethune and identifying reasons that the sites were important to her. Developed as a game, puzzle, brochure, exhibit or hand-out, this project could be a valuable teaching tool for youngsters, especially those living in the capital city, by helping them to become familiar with their city. Sites might include, but would not be limited to, Bethune's northwest residential addresses at 316 T Street, 1812 9th Street, and 1318 Vermont Avenue; her northwest NYA addresses from 1340 G Street (1936) to 2145 C Street (1943); places she frequented, such as the National Association of Colored Women's Headquarters on O Street (which has been torn down and replaced by another building), the Phyliss Wheatley YWCA, Howard University's Rankin Chapel, Baldwin Hall, and old Freedmen's Hospital, Asbury Methodist Church--where she claimed watch-care membership--and other churches; government landmarks, including the White House, capitol, Labor Department, Interior Department, Justice Department, and Lincoln Memorial; and places she visited once or occasionally, such as the Howard Theater, American University, the Willard Hotel, and the Shoreham Hotel.

4. A Co-operative Project with the Washington, D.C., Public School System for Elementary Youngsters. In 1982, when Governor Bob Graham named Mary McLeod Bethune to the Florida Women's Hall of Fame, he reaffirmed important truths: she was "one of the foremost women of her time and an inspiration for all time." Bethune's *Chicago Defender* publisher, John H. Sengstacke, had once explained why. "Hers [Bethune's] has been a life that blossomed despite inhuman treatment, discrimination, segregation, disfranchisement, peonage, and all other injustices directed at a downtrodden people."[8] In addition to profiting from meaningful

exposures to the inspiring quality of Bethune's life, most youngsters in the D.C. public schools could probably identify with Bethune on varying levels. Any project would be appropriate that would potentially motivate grade-schoolers to understand that they can rise above ascriptive limitations by exploiting opportunities they have now; and that what others see as limitations for them, they might turn into assets. Moreover, a project on Bethune could add interest to these children learning about government and their own city. Maybe it could be undertaken with the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, so that most children could identify with both a towering historical male and female personality.

5. Development and Promotion of Scholarly Literature on Bethune. Currently, most Americans appear to think that women of color didn't rouse themselves to noteworthy civic feats until Montgomery Bus Boycott luminary Rosa Parks sat down in 1955. *Time* magazine's special issue on the most influential heroes and icons of the past century, dated June 14, 1999, seemingly perpetuates this view, recognizing seven black men in the struggle for black empowerment, but only a lone black woman, Rosa Parks. The Bethune Council House National Historical Site could more aggressively take on the responsibility of combating such historical absent mindedness through the development and promotion of scholarly literature on Bethune. It could be done in multiple ways, ranging from assisting in a process for publishing the Mary McLeod Bethune Papers--with a product similar to the *Booker T. Washington Papers*--down to expediting the microfilming of the National Council of Negro Women Papers, particularly for the 1935-1955 period. Such efforts would help to engage scholars and others in the life of a woman whose influence in the varied venues of education, service organizations, and government has seldom been matched.

BETHUNE COUNCIL HOUSE
WASHINGTON, DC

The Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site was the last o
residence of educator, political activist, and presidential adviser Mary McLeod Bet
The Second Empire Victorian townhouse at 1813 Vermont Ave., NW, in the Logan (
Historic District, nows houses the National Archives for Black Women's History.
Bethune bought the house in 1943 to serve as the first headquarters for the Nat
Council of Negro Women. The National Park Service administers the building, v
Congress designated a national historic site in 1982.

1

Mary McLeod Bethune
National Historic Site
Council House

Council House Post Cards

Mary McLeod Bethune
Lincoln Park, Washington, D.C.

Educator and activist Mary McLeod Bethune passes on to youngsters her love of learning. The 15th child of freed slaves, she became a teacher, founded a college in Florida, and was advisor on minority affairs to four presidents. In 1935 she founded the National Council of Negro Women.

2

MARY McLEOD BETHUNE
1875 1955
Let her works praise her

Council House Post Cards

3

Mary McLeod Bethune

4

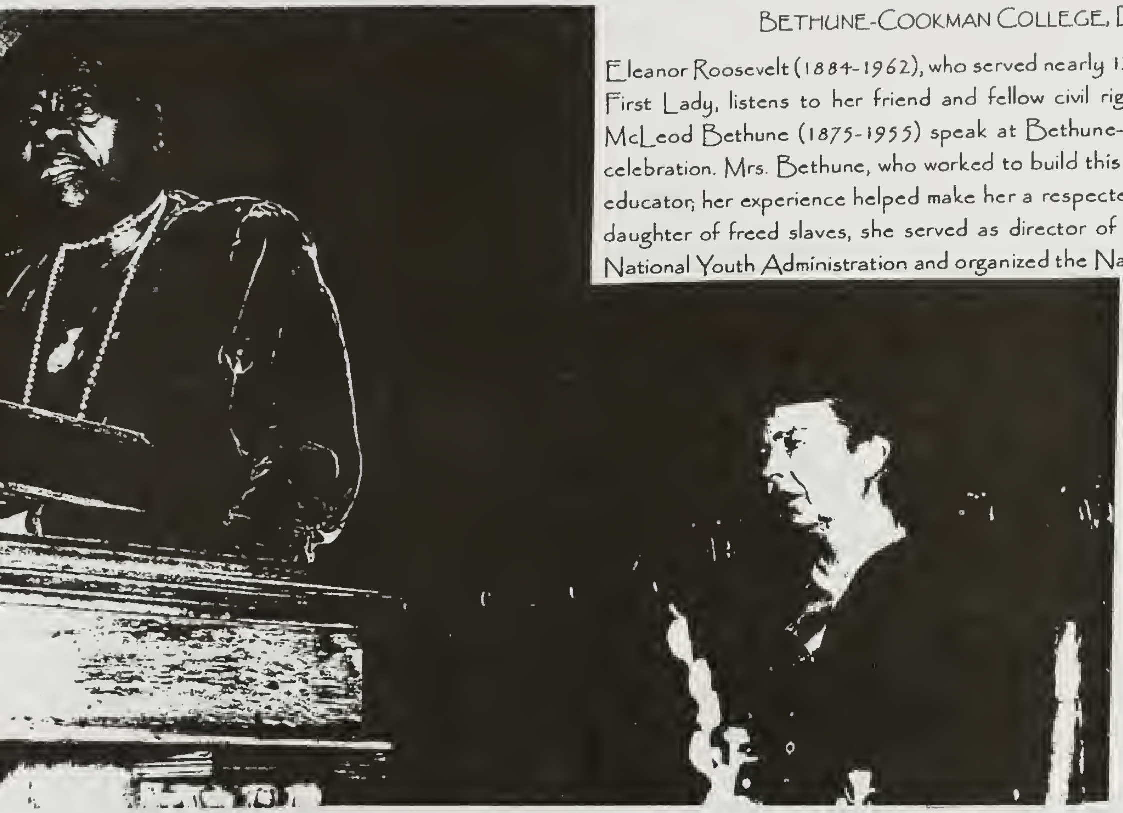
MARY MCLEOD BETHUNE AND CAPITOL

Educator, political activist, and presidential adviser Mary McLeod Bethune stands be the U.S Capitol in an uncredited photograph taken in the mid- to late 1940s. A bro sculpture of her, the first-ever statue of a black woman in the city of Washington, DC dedicated in Lincoln Park in 1974. Her former home and the first headquarters of National Council of Negro Women still stands today, on Logan Circle; it is a unit of National Park Service and houses the National Archives for Black Women's History.

MARY MCLEOD BETHUNE AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON. DC

Mary McLeod Bethune (1875-1955) stands at the gates of the White House, ca 1945 A good friend of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt's, Mrs Bethune served as an adviser on minority affairs to President Franklin D Roosevelt as well as to presidents Calvin Coolidge Herbert Hoover and Harry Truman. She first rose to prominence as an educator for her work building Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona Beach. Florida While in Washington DC helping lead the fight for civil rights, she served as director of the Division of Negro Affairs in the National Youth Administration and organized the National Council of Negro Women

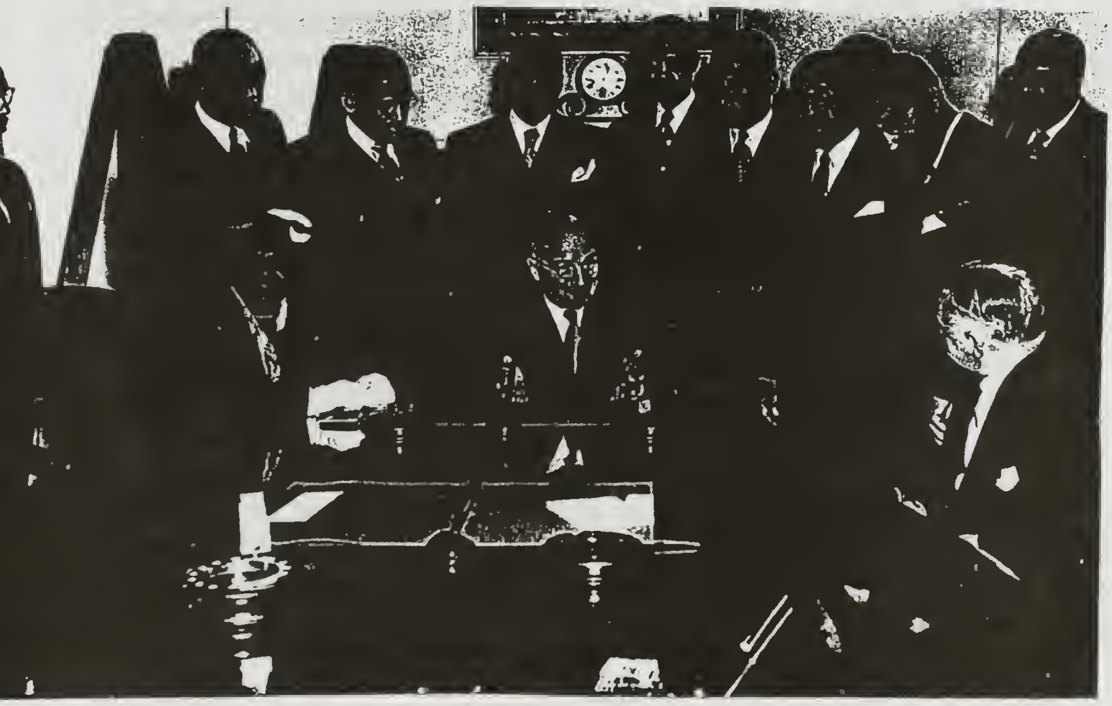


BETHUNE-COOKMAN COLLEGE, DAYTONA BEACH, FL

Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962), who served nearly 12 years as Franklin Delano Rooseve
First Lady, listens to her friend and fellow civil rights and women's rights activist M
McLeod Bethune (1875-1955) speak at Bethune-Cookman College's 35th annivers
celebration. Mrs. Bethune, who worked to build this college, first rose to prominence as
educator; her experience helped make her a respected adviser to four U.S. presidents.
daughter of freed slaves, she served as director of the Division of Negro Affairs in
National Youth Administration and organized the National Council of Negro Women.

5

Council House Post Card



6

MRS. BETHUNE WITH PRESIDENT TRUMAN AND BLACK LEADERS
WASHINGTON, DC

In this 1948 photo by Fred Harris, educator and civil rights activist Mary McLeod Bethune (1875-1955) sits at a conference table with President Harry Truman and Walter White, surrounded by prominent black leaders. Standing left to right are: E. Henderson, Benjamin Mays. W Townsend, A. Philip Randolph, Bishop Bel, D Davis, C Johnson, Channing Tobias (hidden), R Booker, and Lester Granger (rear) Mary McLeod served as a minority affairs adviser not only to President Truman but to his three immediate predecessors: Franklin Roosevelt, Herbert Hoover and Calvin Coolidge

Notes

1. Photograph Number 902, National Council of Negro Women Papers, Series 14, Box 3, Folder 5, Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site, National Park Service, Washington, D.C.

2. *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 13, 1943, 9, and March 20, 1943, 9.

3. Rackham Holt, *Mary McLeod Bethune: A Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 184-188.

4. "Child Welfare," *Time*, December 1, 1930, 38-40; Elaine M. Smith, "Milestones: A Selected Chronology," in *Mary McLeod Bethune: Building a Better World*, ed. Audrey Thomas McCluskey and Elaine M. Smith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 289-290.

5. "Hoover Calls Upon Nation to Give Child 'Fair Chance' in Stress of Grueling Era," *New York Times*, November 20, 1930, 1; the *Washington Post* contended that more than 3,000 were registered for Hoover's conference on children in "Hoover Opens Parley on Children's Health with Keynote Speech," November 20, 1930, 1; Bethune, Entry for December 5, 1929, Dairy for 1929, Mary McLeod Bethune Foundation, Bethune-Cookman College.

6. Truman to Bethune, July 6, 1950, Papers of Harry S. Truman, President's Personal File, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri; Bethune to Constance Daniel, February 5, 1949, NCNW Papers, Series 5, Box 10, Folder 181.

7. City Directory, "The East Coast and Daytona," 2-3, at the Cornelia Young Library, Daytona Beach; John A. Simms, ed., "Negro Education," Daytona Beach, Florida, Federal Writers Project," September 21, 1936, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

8. Quoted from Elaine M. Smith, "Introduction: From '1939 Honor List' to 'An Inspiration for All Time,'" *Guide to the Microfilm Edition of Mary McLeod Bethune Papers: The Bethune Foundation Collection, Part 3* (Bethesda: University Publications of America, 2002), viii; *Chicago Defender*, November 26, 1949, 1.

Appendices

May the names Mary McLeod Bethune
and the National Council of Negro Women
stand forever as symbols of women united
joined in the cause of world brotherhood and peace.

From the Scroll of Honor presented to Mary McLeod Bethune by the National Council of Negro Women
November 18, 1949

Appendix A

Annual Meetings of the National Council of Negro Women
1935-1955

December 5, 1935	137th Street YWCA	New York
December 17, 1936	137th Street YWCA	New York
December 18, 1937	137th Street YWCA	New York
November 26, 1938	137th Street YWCA	New York
November 3-4, 1939	137th Street YWCA	New York
October 24-26, 1940	Department of Labor	Washington, D.C.
October 16-18, 1941	Department of Labor	Washington, D.C.
October 15-17, 1942*	Southside Community Art Center	Chicago
October 15-17, 1943*	137th Street YWCA	New York
October 12-15, 1944*	Department of Labor	Washington, D.C.
October 30-31, 1945*	Department of Labor	Washington, D.C.
November 13-16, 1946	Department of Labor	Washington, D.C.
November 10-14, 1947	Department of Labor	Washington, D.C.
October 10-13, 1948	Department of Labor	Washington, D.C.
November 15-18, 1949	Department of Labor	Washington, D.C.
November 16-18, 1950	Department of Labor	Washington, D.C.
October 24-27, 1951	Department of Labor	Washington, D.C.
1952**		
November 12-14, 1953	Department of Labor	Washington, D.C.
November 8-13, 1954	Department of Labor	Washington, D.C.
November 8-12, 1955	Department of Labor	Washington, D.C.

*Due to the exigencies of the war years, the federal government prohibited large conventions. Therefore, during this period, the NCNW held workshops for members of the Executive Board and selected guest.

**At the 1951 regular meeting, the NCNW voted unanimously to hold biennial meetings. In 1952, however, it held a workshop at the Council House for the Board of Directors and department chairpersons on November 14-16, 1952, climaxed by a dinner meeting at Howard University. In 1953, the NCNW voted to resume annual meetings.

Appendix B

Milestones during Mary McLeod Bethune's NCNW Presidency
1935-1949

December 5, 1935

Mary McLeod Bethune organized the National Council of Negro Women and was elected its president at the Harlem YWCA, 179 West 137th Street, New York.

1936

The Women's Auxiliary to the National Dental Association was founded by A.A. Mackel to promote dental health and education and to support the National Dental Association.

The Women's Auxiliary to the National Medical Association was founded by Alma Wells Givens and N.M. Byrd to promote education related to health and sanitation and in other ways to support the work of the National Medical Association; also, to foster fellowship among members of the NMA and their families.

April 29, 1936

At Howard University during its second meeting, the NCNW elected a slate of officers for the first time.

June 24, 1936

Bethune assumed full-time government employment as the ranking specialist on Negro Affairs in the National Youth Administration, at 1340 G. Street, N.W, Washington, D.C.

July 25, 1936

The NCNW was incorporated in Washington, D.C.

August 7, 1936

Bethune convened a meeting of seven other government employees at 316 T Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., which led to the organization of the Federal Council on Negro Affairs, commonly called the Black Cabinet.

October 27, 1936

Bethune elected president of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History during its annual meeting at Virginia State College in Petersburg.

December 17, 1936

Bethune attended the first meeting of the President's Special Committee on Farm Tenancy as a member of the committee.

1937

Lambda Kappa Mu founded by Florence K. Norman in New York to stimulate businesswomen to greater personal advancement, cultural awareness, and an appreciation of women's progress; also, to foster fellowship.

January 6-8, 1937

Bethune presided over the National Conference on the Problems of the Negro and Negro Youth at the Department of Labor, 14th and Constitution Avenue, Washington, D.C., sponsored by the National Youth Administration.

January 23, 1937

Bethune's first *Pittsburgh Courier* column appeared; the last one was on June 18, 1938.

April 9, 1937

In the person of executive secretary Lucy Slowe, the NCNW testified before a Congressional Committee for the first time.

December 18, 1937

The NCNW initiated the dinner session at its annual meeting, with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt as speaker at New York's Harlem YWCA.

April 4, 1938

The NCNW held a White House Conference on Governmental Cooperation in the Approach to the Problems of Negro Women and Children.

November 20-23, 1938

Bethune an other NCNW members attended the first meeting of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare in Birmingham. Bethune was elected a vice-president at large.

January 12-14, 1939

Bethune presided over the Second National Conference on the Problems of the Negro and Negro Youth at the Department of Labor in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the National Youth Administration.

April 9, 1939

Bethune and 75,000 others attended Marion Anderson's Easter Concert at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. Earlier, Bethune had protested the denial of a public school auditorium for the Anderson concert; Eleanor Roosevelt had protested the denial of Constitution Hall, which the Daughters of the American Revolution owned.

April 26-May 10, 1939

Bethune was a delegate at large to the historic Uniting Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church South, and the Methodist Protestant Church in Kansas

City, Missouri.

November 27, 1939

With other panelists, Bethune addressed the topic, "What Democracy Means To Me" on "America's Town Meeting of the Air," originating in New York and carried nationwide over radio.

February 18, 1940

Bethune presided over the Thirty-fifth Anniversary Celebration of Bethune-Cookman College. Director of the National Youth Administration Aubrey Williams and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt gave the principal addresses.

April 1940

The inaugural issue of the *Aframerican Woman's Journal*, NCNW's quarterly organ, appeared. Sue Baily Thurman was editor.

August 1940

The NCNW held a Cuban Seminar in Cuba.

October 24-26, 1940

For the first time, the NCNW moved its annual meeting from New York to Washington, D.C., where it met at the Labor Department and held a session at the White House.

October 1941

The NCNW was admitted into membership of the essentially white National Council of Women of the United States.

November 1941

After protest, the NCNW was admitted into membership of the essentially white Women's Advisory Council of the Women's Interest Section lodged in the War Department of the United States.

April 20, 1942

Along with President Frank Porter Graham of the University of North Carolina, Bethune received the Thomas Jefferson Award for Outstanding Service to the South, from the white-led Southern Conference for Human Welfare at its biennial meeting in Nashville.

June 27, 1942

Bethune assisted in the initial selection of officer candidates for the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps through a five-day detail from the National Youth Administration to the War Department in Washington, D.C.

September 29, 1942

Bethune officiated at the launching of the *Booker T. Washington*, the first liberty ship to be named for an African American, in Los Angeles. Contralto Marian Anderson christened the vessel.

October 15-17, 1942

At the Southside Community Art Center, the NCNW held its annual meeting in Chicago for the first time.

November 15, 1942

In Chicago, Lovonia H. Brown organized the Women's Army for National Defense (WAND) to provide volunteer services. Each chapter was named for an outstanding African American woman, with the first chapter designated as Mary McLeod Bethune.

December 15, 1942

Bethune resigned the presidency of Bethune-Cookman College.

April 1943

The NCNW employed Jeanetta Welch Brown as it first full-time, salaried executive secretary.

June 1943

The inaugural issue of TELEFACT, the NCNW monthly newsletter, appeared.

The NCNW held its first Wartime Employment Clinics.

July 4-10, 1943

The NCNW held "We Serve America Week" to demonstrate the contributions of black women to the war effort.

August 1943

The NCNW presented solicited recommendations to officials of the Women' Army Corps for recruiting African Americans.

September 12-18, 1943

The NCNW participated in "Hold Your Job Week," an activity observed in black communities in most states.

1944

Bethune's article "Certain Unalienable Rights" was published in *What the Negro Wants*, edited by Howard University historian Rayford W. Logan.

January 24, 1944

Bethune officially left government because of the liquidation of the National Youth Administration.

February 11, 1944

The NCNW took the initiative in sponsoring with the National Council of Jewish Women, the National Council of Catholic Women, the National Women's Trade Union League, the National Council of Women of the U.S., and the National Board of the YWCA, a national planning conference on "Building Better Race Relations" for leaders of thirty national women's organizations. Held in Washington, D.C., and featuring First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt as a speaker, it explored "methods of joint social action in the areas of education, economic security, health, housing, and citizenship, and formed a Continuation Committee that met for at least two years.

June 3, 1944

In cooperation with the New England Shipbuilding Corporation, the S.S. *Harriet Tubman*, the first liberty ship named to honor a black woman, was launched in Portland, Maine, under NCNW auspices.

October 13, 1944

The makings of an annual International Night at the NCNW convention occurred at the Department of Labor in Washington, D.C. Representatives of the Phillippines, Liberia, Mexico, Costa Rica, France, China, Haiti, Great Britain, and Belgium gave expressions. The featured speaker was former U.S. ambassador to Norway, Florence Harriman.

October 15, 1944

The NCNW dedicated its headquarters building at 1318 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, publisher-social worker Agnes E. Meyer, and educator Charlotte Hawkins Brown gave addresses.

February 10, 1945

The NCNW initiated a reception at Council House for individuals on its first annual "Roll of Honor" of outstanding women.. Topping the list were First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who like most of the sixteen honorees, collected her award in person.

March 1-2, 1945

Florida A & M College held a "Testimonial Celebration Honoring Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune" in Tallahassee.

April 3, 1945

After the NCNW and other organizations intervened, the army voided the court marshal sentences of four black women enlisted in the Women's Army Corps. They had served in Fort Devens, Massachusetts.

April 13, 1945

One of several speakers, Bethune eulogized President Franklin D. Roosevelt during a national radio tribute on the eve of his White House funeral.

April 24, 1945

Officially representing the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, as an associate consultant to the United States delegation, Bethune began a five-week stint at the United Nations Conference on International Organization, which drafted the United Nations Charter in San Francisco. More than fourteen NCNW members attended sessions.

July 10, 1945

The NCNW held a Seventieth Bethune Birthday fundraiser, with Bethune present and Secretary of Commerce Henry K. Wallace speaking, at the Howard Theatre in Washington, D.C.

July 16-24, 1945

With four other members of the women's National Civilian Advisory Committee, Bethune toured six hospitals in the northeast to observe the work, housing, and adequacy of training of servicewomen in the Women's Army Corps.

October 27, 1945

Marjorie Stewart Joyner of Chicago organized the National Association of Beauty School Owners and Teachers at the NCNW Council House in Washington to serve as a clearinghouse for beauty culture schools, both large and small. Mary McLeod Bethune and Congressman William Dawson, Chicago Democrat, were the national sponsors.

1946

The NCNW established a regional organizational schema to help provide leadership for local councils.

1946

The NCNW achieved observer status at the United Nations in New York with attorney Eunice Hunton Carter, who had attended the 1945 founding of the organization in San Francisco, as its official representative.

1946

President Harry Truman appointed Mary McLeod Bethune to the President's Highway Safety Conference that most state governors attended.

January 18-27, 1946

Bethune spoke in nine cities, located in five southern states, on behalf of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare.

July 1, 1946

Bethune resumed the presidency of Bethune-Cookman College for one year.

July 27-August 2, 1946

As a former president and chair of its headquarters Trustee Board, Bethune attended the Golden Jubilee biennial meeting of the National Association of Colored Women in Washington, D.C.

December 5, 1946

President Harry Truman appointed NCNW stalwart Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander, Philadelphia's assistant city solicitor, as one of two women and the only black woman on his fifteen-member national Committee on Civil Rights. The following year, it produced the hugely influential report, "To Secure These Rights," calling for the federal government to take positive steps to eradicate racial segregation and discrimination.

September 2-12, 1947

A representative number of NCNW members attended the triennial meeting of the International Council of Women in Philadelphia, the first such meeting since World War II. NCNW President Mary Bethune was one of the ten official delegates from the U.S. National Council of Women.

February 15, 1948

The NCNW gave a formal diplomatic reception at Council House in honor of Haitian Ambassador Joseph D. Charles and Liberian Minister and Mrs. C.B.D. King. "Representatives of seventeen legations, distinguished government officials, and outstanding citizens" were included among five hundred guests.

March 4, 1948

Under the leadership of honorary co-chairs Eleanor Roosevelt and Mary Church Terrell and chair Channing H. Tobias, Mary McLeod Bethune was given a Testimonial Dinner at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York, attended by 450 citizens from various walks of life.

October 16, 1948

Bethune's first *Chicago Defender* column appeared; the last was on June 4, 1955.

February 2, 1949

The NCNW sponsored singer Carol Brice in concert at Carnegie Hall in New York.

February 21, 1949

Bethune received from Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida, a Doctor of Humanities Degree, the first honorary degree awarded by a Southern white college to an African American.

March 15, 1949

Bethune featured on "This Is Your Life" national television show, originating in Los Angeles.

April 1949

Bethune's photograph, against the backdrop of the nation's capitol, filled the cover of *Ebony* magazine, which carried her article, "My Secret Talks with FDR."

April 22-23, 1949

Jeanetta Welch Brown organized the National Association of Fashion and Accessory Designers in New York to promote creative talents, encourage high work standards, and open new business, employment and educational opportunities to its members.

June 24, 1949

As the NCNW representative, Edith Sampson began the "Town Hall World Seminar," a two-month, 35,000-mile journey around the world with representatives of twenty-six other nationally recognized organizations. Towards the end of the trip, Sampson, the only black woman participating, was elected president of the seminar.

July 12-22, 1949

Bethune visited the Republic of Haiti as a guest of its government and received the Order of Honor and Merit, the country's highest award. Haiti had never before bestowed this honor on a woman.

November 13, 1949

President Harry Truman was the guest speaker for International Night at the NCNW annual convention held at the Labor Department Auditorium in Washington. The NCNW presented outstanding citizenship awards to United Nations Director of Trusteeship, Ralph Bunche; the first woman ambassador to the U.S., Vijaya Pandit of India; veteran organizational and civil rights activist, Mary Church Terrell; the first black circuit judge William H. Hastie, of the Third U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals; and twelve others.

November 18, 1949

The NCNW held a gala dinner honoring Mary McLeod Bethune on her retirement from the NCNW presidency, in the dining room of the U.S. Department of the Interior. At that time, the organization had twenty-three national affiliates, eighty four local councils in twenty-six states, and hundreds of life members.

Appendix C

National Affiliates of the National Council of Negro Women in 1949*

Listed below are the national affiliates of the National Council of Negro Women in 1949. The most important national women's organization that failed to affiliate with the NCNW was the National Association of Colored Women, founded in Washington, D.C. in 1896.

1. Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority - Organized in 1908 at Howard University by Ethel Hedgeman Lyle and eight others to encourage high scholastic, cultural, and ethical standards among college women. It was the first Greek-letter organization for black college women.

2. Chi Eta Phi Sorority - Organized in 1932 at Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, D.C., by Aliene C. Ewell and eleven others to elevate nursing standards and to stimulate others to pursue health care careers.

3. Delta Sigma Theta Sorority - Organized in 1913 at Howard University by Osceola McCarthy Adams and four others to promote high cultural, intellectual, and moral ideals, and involvement in the suffrage movement

4. Grand Daughter Elks - (Grand Temple, Daughters of the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World) Organized in 1902 by Emma V. Kelley to combat illiteracy and juvenile delinquency; protect civil liberties; and teach needlework, thrift, and public speaking.

5. Imperial Court, Daughters of Isis - (Auxiliary of the Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order, Nobles Mystic Shrine of North and South America) Organized in 1910 in Detroit at the annual meeting of the male order to practice constancy in accepting responsibility as befitting an intelligent, adult citizenry practicing Christian principles.

6. International Heroines of Jericho - (International Conference of Grand Courts Heroines of Jericho, Prince Hall Masonic Order) Organized in 1884 to instruct children in the "lead and follow" method and to give scholarships.

7. Iota Phi Lambda Sorority - Organized in 1929 in Chicago by Lola M. Parker with six others to promote higher education among high school girls, to provide scholarships in business education, to sponsor school typing contests, and to stimulate business education among members.

8. Lambda Kappa Mu Sorority - Organized in 1937 in New York by Florence K. Norman to stimulate businesswomen to greater personal advancement, cultural awareness, and an appreciation of women's progress; also, to foster fellowship.

9. National Achievement Clubs - Organized in 1935 by Alma Illery to help the needy at home or in hospitals and to strengthen education work in the community and elsewhere.

10. National Association of Beauty School Owners and Teachers -Organized in 1945 in Washington D.C., at the NCNW Council House, by Marjorie Stewart Joyner to serve as a clearing house for beauty culture schools both large and small. Mary McLeod Bethune and Congressman William Dawson, Chicago Democrat, were national sponsors.

11. National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses - Organized in 1908 in Philadelphia by Martha Franklin and Adah Thoms to promote the best interests of nurses, including graduate nursing education, and to foster integration of African Americans into the American Nursing Association.

12. National Association of Fashion and Accessory Designers - Organized in 1949 in New York City by Jeanetta Welch Brown to foster creative talents, encourage high work standards, and open new business, employment, and educational opportunities.

13. National Beauty Culturists League - Organized in 1919 in Philadelphia to foster good public relations especially "by encouraging standardized, scientific and approved methods of hair, scalp, and skin treatments;" to serve as a clearing house for members, an industry lobby in legislatures, and in other ways promote the welfare of members.

14. National Jeanes Association - Organized in 1942 as the National Association of Jeanes Supervisors, consisting of teachers for Southern black rural schools who emphasized vocational subjects and were supported by the Negro Rural School Fund, better known as the Jeanes Fund, from heiress Anna Jeanes. In 1937, this fund merged with others to create the Southern Educational Foundation.

15. National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa - Organized in 1923 in Jersey City by Julia Asbury Barnes and five others to facilitate the work of teachers in promoting educational advancement.

16. Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority - Organized in 1922 at Butler University in Indianapolis by Nannie Mae G. Johnson and six others "to promote fellowship and professional growth among school teachers."

17. Women's Army for National Defense - (WAND) Organized in 1942 in Chicago by Lovonia H. Brown to provide an instrument though which black women could render volunteer service in their communities to promote American victory in world War II.

18. Women's Auxiliary to the National Dental Association - Organized in 1936 by A.A. Mackel to advance dental health and education and the National Dental Association.

19. Women's Auxiliary to the National Medical Association - Organized in 1936 in Philadelphia by Alma Wells Givens and N.M. Byrd to advance education related to health and sanitation and generally, the National Medical association; also, to foster fellowship among members.

20. Woman's Home and Foreign Missionary Society, AME Zion Church - Organized in 1880 in Montgomery, Alabama, at the denomination's General Conference, with Mrs. S. T. Jones of Washington, D.C., as president, to propagate the gospel at home and "in Africa, and other distant lands" through the support of missionaries and conference activities.

21. Women's Missionary Society of the AME Church - organized in 1944 through a merger of the African Methodist Episcopal Church's Woman's Mite Missionary Society and the Woman's Home and Foreign Missionary Society. It's purpose was to promote services to people in need at home and abroad.

22. Women's Missionary Council of the CME Church - Organized in 1918 to assist in evangelization, to develop needed programs, and "to promote cooperation, fellowship, and mutual counsel" within the life of the church.

23. Zeta Phi Beta Sorority - Organized in 1920 at Howard University by Arizona Cleaver and four others "to expand the concepts of and dedication to scholarship, service, and sisterhood."

*This listing relies mostly on "National Black Women's Organizations 1863-Present," a typescript compiled by Archivist Susan McElrath in 1995 for the Bethune Museum and Archives, Inc., now the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House, National Historic Site, Washington, D.C.

The national affiliates are listed as they appear in the Printed Program of the NCNW 14th Annual Conference, November 15-18, 1949, Washington, D.C., pages 4-6. The only affiliate listed in this program that is excluded above is Heroines of Jericho of Texas. This affiliate appears to be a state organization and does not appear on the convention program either the year before the '49 conference or afterwards.